Teaching At a Distance

INAYAT KHAN

In India, though teaching at a distance started at the tertiary level in 1962, the faculty of distance teaching is still at its infancy. In spite of the claim and efforts of the distant educators, the system has not been able to shed off much of the apathy of the multitude of the votaries of formal education.

Very few research and still fewer books have been published in this country on this aspect of education to study the various aspects of distance education. The present articles are put together with a fond hope of presenting some aspects of distance teaching in this country. These were presented by the authors in various seminars, conferences, workshops on distance education over a period of more than a decade in this country. Yet the problems discussed in these papers have not lost their relevance even today. The article of Dr. Baath is a research paper conducted on behalf of the European Home Study Council in 1981. Perhaps except this article, all other articles, to our knowledge, were not published earlier anywhere. So it is hoped that these articles will prove useful to the students and researchers of distance education.

TEACHING AT A DISTANCE

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SOME PAPERS ON DISTANCE EDUCATION

Edited by
INAYAT KHAN

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If you are planning for a year, plant rice;
If you are planning for ten years, plant trees;
If you are planning for a hundred years, give the right type of education to the young.

—a chinese proverb.

This Book is
Dedicated
to
The Memory of
my beloved
Mother

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Editor's Preface

Teaching at a distance is not new to this country—in fact we have already passed twenty seven years since the begining of the first correspondence course at the university level started by the University of Delhi. As spelt out by the then Minister for Education, Government of India (Dr. K.L. Shrimali) the main objectives of starting courses through correspondence were :

"(a) to provide an efficient and less expensive method of educational instruction at a higher level in the context of the national development of India;

(b) to provide facilities to pursue higher education to all qualified and willing persons, who had failed to join regular university courses due to personal and economic reasons or because of their inability to get admission to a regular college; and

(c) to provide opportunities of academic pursuits to educated citizens to improve their standard of knowledge and learning through correspondence instruction without disturbing their present employment."

Demands for higher education were high and the correspondence courses were immediately successful. By 1964, the pressure on conventional system of education was so great that while dealing with the national pattern of education and future policies for educational development in the country, the Education Commission of India (1964) recommended the establishment of evening colleges and institutes of correspondence courses to democratize higher education. The Commission was optimistic (because of the success of the distance teaching system in other developed and developing countries) and suggested that

"by 1986 at least one third of the total enrolment in higher education could with advantage be provided through a system of correspondence courses and evening colleges."

So correspondence institutes were started by various universities with the financial assistance of the University Grants Commission, which was entrusted with the task of maintaining the standard of education in these institutes. The institutes catered to the syllabi and courses offered by the affiliating universities. Till todate, to overcome the possibility of discrimination, the syllabi, examination and degree pattern of the distance teaching institutes have been kept similar to those offered by regular college and university departments.

Correspondence Courses have come a long way and at present no fewer than 31 universities are offering courses through correspondence in India. As per the latest figures available (Datt 1988), enrolment in various correspondence institutes stood at 3.71 lakhs in 1985 in the country—which was more than a 100 per cent rise in enrolment through correspondence courses over a period of 3 years. But this quantitative growth does not necessarily reflect a healthy growth of distance education. A careful analysis of the system has revealed that the development of correspondence courses in this country has not been properly planned nor has any attempt been made to evaluate their usefulness. Though the University Grants Commission has been supplying guidelines every now and then, it has not been able to control the unwieldy growth of the institutes. There is no effective coordination not only between the institutes/universities but also among the central and state educational planners.

For this reason, institutes of correspondence courses have been almost left alone to fund for themselves. The affiliating universities are so busy in their problems relating to formal education that they do not have time to plan and promote the correspondence courses. While some institutes have more than 30000 students on their rolls (as in the South India), some others do not have enough students to make themselves viable units. The government policy of considering correspondence courses self-financing, has made some institutes act more like machinery units than academic institutions. These units have not cared to maintain adequate teaching staff, nor provide much facilities to the students. Some even make money for their universities. Therefore, many correspondence educators had demanded the establishment of an apex body to coordinate the activities of the existing correspondence institutes.

Though the Andhra Pradesh Open University was set up first, the establishment of Indira Gandhi National Open University has brought about a change in the distance teaching scenario in the country in the sense that it is not plagued with many problems faced by the correspondence institutes of other universities. Its courses are planned. It has its own syllabi and examination pattern. Its lesson materials and other teaching aids are definitely way ahead than most of the materials available elsewhere in the country. However, it has not yet given any concrete help to any other university/institute of correspondence cousres to improve their existing teaching tools. (It has been learnt that the Kota Open University, Rajasthan and the Nalanda Open University, Bihar are planning to use the instructional material produced by the IGNOU for their students). Initially, the IGNOU started giving some innovative and unconventional courses like Diploma in Management, Diploma in Distance Education. But of late, it has also started giving courses at the first degree level like B.A., B.Com., etc. So the IGNOU and other correspondence institutes have suddenly become competitive institutions. Some universities have lost their previous enrolment figures on this account. Therefore after the coming up of IGNOU, there appears a dichotomy in the policy of Government of India in promoting distance teaching in the country.

Distance education system in India has so far confined itself to the traditional courses like B.A., B.Com., M.A. etc. though a few universities have tried to tap the potentialities of correspondence education in providing interdisciplinary, vocational and job-oriented courses. This is a meaningful direction for our future development and it needs serious thought if we really want to make education relevant to the needs of our society.

But it is feared that so long as correspondence education is under the exclusive control of traditional universities or institutions, there would not be much scope for breakthrough. It would remain a poor relation of the traditional system of education and will not grow beyond that.

Time is now ripe for the correspondence institutes to stand on their own to devise their courses, syllabi and examination pattern. The IGNOU could act as a coordinating agency to develop the courses and teaching materials of all existing correspondence institutes of the country to provide credibility to teaching at a distance.

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PART ONE

ORGANISATION & DEVELOPMENT OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

1

On The Organisation of Distance Study

PROF. BORJE HOLMBERG*

The organization of conventional universities and schools does not meet the requirements of distance education. Normally there are no students on the premises of the central body responsible for distance education activities except for occosional visits. Instead of lecture rooms, facilities are required for development of course materials, which normally means making provision for the work of course teams consisting of author(s), visualizer, AV audio-visual specialist and editor project leader, for correspondence of different kinds, for tutorial service at a distance and for registration. Arrangements for face-to-face meetings with students may be made centrally, regionally or locally.

The development of course materials requires an establishment that is a combination of a research institute and a publisher's editorial office, providing facilities for course teams to work with various media, in some cases including radio and TV and in any case arrangements for recording. Not only texts but also art work, laboratory activities and the production of experimental 'kits' are to be catered for.

Administration

If large numbers of students belong to a distance study

*A background paper for regional Seminars in Correspondence Education held in Nov.-December 1978 in India.

institution, university or school, a fairly complicated administrative system is necessary to cope with the work. Pre-registration counselling and routine correspondence with would-be students requesting factual information requires effective organization, and so do counselling and other correspondence with students enrolled. The correction of and commenting on students' papers must be organized so that the right tutor receives the right students' papers and any necessary background information without delay. Procedures for applications and enrolments, registration and statistics are necessary. Warehouse and dispatch arrangements have to be made for the course materials, and quick turn-over for all communication with the students must be provided. The use of a computer is often desirable.

For smaller organizations the administrative problems are somewhat different. The recording of students' achievements can, for instance, be in the hands of the tutors, who may also look after considerable parts of the counselling activities.

If there are to be facilities for face-to-face consultations with tutor-counsellors for group activities and for supplementary residential sessions, these require special administrative structures.

The organizational and administrative aspects of distance education naturally vary with the cultural and sociological contexts in which distance study is made available. They have been much discussed in connection with institution building, above all in developing countries, but—as will be evident from the short bibliographical list at the end of this chapter—few studies on this problem area have been published although it is well worth looking into. In practice, the most perfect course and tutor service are (as I have preached elsewhere) of no avail if the office organization of a school does not work properly. If it is not effective, neither suitable courses nor constructive teacher comments will reach the students in time.

It is the task of the administrative organization to bring about :

— correct, competent and courteous treatment of all letters sent to the school, correct delivery of instructional material, information circulars etc., and proper reception of students calling in person or on the telephone.
— short turn-around time for assignments submitted in

writing, on audio tape and by other media and for letters applying for information and advice, containing questions, requests, complaints or suggestions, etc.

— practical provision for the educational use of the telephone, the computer and other aids included in the working methods.
— accurate, easily available registration of data.
— checking on students' progress and procedures for distributing reminders to those who fall behind or seem to be in danger of dropping out.
— facilities—when needed—for supplementary teaching (oral refresher courses, laboratory instruction, etc.),
— general efficiency in all the above activities at a reasonable cost.

The circuit time or turn-around time for assignments submitted is worth particular attention as it has been proved to exercise great influence on the completion rate and the study intensity of students.

Planning

If, as suggested above, it is proper to say that the administrative procedures are dependent on the societies where distance education is applied, that is even more true of the planning of distance education institutions. Some are parts of national educational systems and as such reflect national policies and reasources, whereas others are independent, whether non-profit-making foundations or business concerns.

Process analysis

The organizational and administrative management requires a study of the processes involved in distance education. Such a study leads to control actions initiated to remedy any deficiencies and generally to create optimal conditions affecting the relations between students and the teaching organization—tutors, counsellors, administrators—as well as the creation of opportunities for profitable cooperation among the students themselves. Like classroom learning, distance education may well profit from process analysis.

Special educational and administrative aspects of organization

Two-way communication

Apart from the simulated didactic conversations that distance education courses contain or stimulate through suggestions to consider, summarize, etc. and through self-checking exercises, it is customary for courses to provide questions, problems and other tasks, the replies and solutions of which, including essays, reports and other independent papers, are to be submitted for comment, evaluation and correction. Most institutions responsible for distance education ascribe a number of didactic functions to such assignments for submission. A study made by Baath of 34 European correspondence education institutes, including the Open University in Britain, reveals the following functions of assignments for submission, in order of considered importance.

Functions		*Rank Points*
F	to give the students effective feedback help them to correct their mistakes and control their progress.	91
A	to motivate the students, owing to the fact that the assignments for submission serve a sub-goals.	58
I	to make it possible for the school to evaluate the students' achievements during the course, in order to be able to give each student help ('formative evaluation').	49
B	to give the instructor/tutor opportunity to motivate the students by giving them encouragement, praise, etc.	38
E	to activate the students.	37
G	to give the students opportunities for application and transfer of their knowledge.	37
K	to make it possible for the school to evaluate the students' achievements and mark their solutions, in order to be able to give them certificates at the end of study ('summative evaluation').	33

Functions		*Rank Points*
M	to give the school feedback—help it to find out how well its instruction works and in what ways the material should be revised.	32
L	to create opportunities for contact between students and school in order to counteract students feelings of isolation.	30
D	to give the students opportunities for survey, summing up and integration of various parts of the unit (or different parts of the course).	26
C	to focus the students' attention on important learning objectives.	14
H	to serve as a means for the students to revise the whole study unit.	10
N	to teach in such a fashion that knowledge is retained, through practice in writing.	5
N	sent according to schedule, to compel the students to regular work.	5
	Total	466

A difficult problem, which has already been referred to, is how frequently such tasks should be provided bearing in mind the preferences of students and the learning effect. Most course units end with such tasks, but the size of units varies from as little as eight to more than 100 pages and the number of hours that students spend working on study units varies considerably the subject and other factors. It is possible, though seldom practised, to provide an extensive battery of assignments, from among which students are encouraged to select those that they find particularly interesting or that coincide with their specific study objectives. This could be one way to bring about the students autonomy that has been discussed above. If students were to select their own study objectives, on the basis of this selection could concentrate on the corresponding parts of the course and were offered assignments related to the parts chosen or even alternative assignments within their chosen study areas, then the autonomous student would be provided with more appropriate study opportunities than distance education is normally capable of offering.

A less satisfactory but more common method of individualization is simply to make assignments for submission voluntary without providing the students with selection instruments related to individual study objectives.

Communication at the initiative of students, based on the questions they raise and want further comment on, with suggestions for further reading, implementation and practice, is something of an ideal. So far it occurs mainly as a supplementary form of communication, the normal procedure being based on assignments provided by the course. If practised throughout, it would require the creation of new types of courses deliberately developed in such a way that both explicitly and implicitly they invite questions, comments and suggestions from students.

This discussion, as well as being common practice, is based on the implicit understanding that didactic two-way communication is a desirable and necessary element of distance education. There is almost universal agreement about this hypothesis. A study of students' attitudes also supports it.

What contribution the distance tutor should make to this communication has been much discussed. It is usually felt to be important that he/she should motivate the students, create a pleasant 'mathmagenic positive' atmosphere by trying to establish friendly contact with them, and contribute to cognitive learning by explanations, examples & references supplementing the routine correction and assessing. There would seem to be no reason to question the importance of these tasks.

Whereas it is evident that the use of a computer and other automatic devices is based on the programming of tutor comments, the need and desirability of which are forseen while the course is being developed, the relation between spontaneous comments and those which have been pre-produced or even programmed for an automatic typewriter is far from clear in ordinary distance education. Most tutors in subjects where the students are not expected to submit creative essays find that certain misunderstandings occur so frequently that they have a kind of standardized comment ready for them, mentally and often enough on paper.

Some schools of distance education have found it practical to work with a battery of carefully prepared explanatory comments that tutors can use either in the form of appendices to the student's paper when this is returned with handwritten tutor comments or as

sections of typed letters. These sections are often programmed on cards or tape for automatic typing whereas other sections of the same letter are typed after the dictation of the tutor. The experiences of pre-produced tutor comments are favourable.

An evident weakness in normal distance study is the delayed feedback provided by tutor comments whether direct and personal or computerized. Only by tele-communication is immediate feedback in distant two-way communication possible. Students seem to accept and profit from comments and corrections given within 7-10 days after an assignment has been completed, but are usually dissatisfied if the delay is of longer duration. Students on the whole seem highly appreciative of the two-way communication element and expect rather full comments on their submitted work within as few days as possible. Completion rates have been shown to correlate with short circuit or turn-around time (and also with encouraging, reminding letters on the occasions when students have been passive for a period).

If it is considered important that students should be able themselves to decide on the pace of study they must either receive the full course at the outset or be provided with new course units as they submit assignments for correction and comments. In the latter case it is essential that they always have two or three units available apart from the one they are working on. Otherwise they may be kept waiting for course material they need, which would be a bad waste of time.

The idea behind the division of the material into study units is that the students should be offered a suitable quantity of learning matter at a time so that he/she can regard the study of each unit as a separate task and can always survey the material to be learnt. The theory is that in this way it is possible to prevent the bulk of possibly difficult study material from intimidating him/her. With each finished unit and with the tasks in it completed he/she sees the results of his/her work.

Combinations of distance and continuous learning

An important methodological decision to be made in many cases is to what extent oral elements in the form of face-to-face sessions are to supplement the distant study course. Such sessions are considered valuable for the purposes of :

— securing cognitive learning by discussion and application

of the knowledge acquired to themes brought up in direct contacts with tutors and fellow students.
— practising psychomotor skills in laboratories and under similar conditions; also verbal skills are trained through personal communication.
— understanding the communication process and human behaviour.
— acquiring attitudes and habits of value for the study, such as critical approaches, checking information and sources, openness to new ways of thinking.
— mutual inspiration and stimulation of fellow students.

Whereas one school of thinking finds face-to-face sessions essential, another finds them unnecessary and even, in some cases, harmful. No conclusive proof has been established either to prove the necessity of face-to-face elements or to reject them as conventional embellishments. A study by Beijer showed that above all the 'very youngest students (youths of school age)' were 'keen on having correspondence education supplemented by oral course features'. Beijer adds that there is a tendency to set greater store on traditional correspondence education with increasing age. What has been proved in a number of examinations is that cognitive study objectives in general and psychomotor objectives aimed at skills in the fields of written achievement (in languages and mathematics, for instance) are attained at least as well by distance study based on the written word as by conventional classes. There seem to be 'no studies of achievement which show that correspondence study students do less well than classroom students, a number which show that they do as well, and a number which show that they do as well, and a number which show that they do better. One thing of which we may be certain is that correspondence study does an excellent job of subject matter instruction'. The effectiveness of distance study in the affective domain has been queried, however, though on somewhat uncertain grounds.

To benefit from the advantages of both distance study and face-to-face tutoring is naturally something found desirable. It is also in many cases practicable. Combining oral tuition with distance study causes some difficulties that have not, however, regularly been coped with successfully. Efficient tutors in a class

or group are apt to take command and teach instead of guiding or advertising, thereby deproving the students of the initiative and taking over part of the function of the self-instructional course. This often leads to the students being given too much instruction (the tutor doubles the course), to their being to some extent put in a conflict situation because of differences of approach between the course and the tutor, and to the guidance and consultation planned being converted into a kind of more or less conventional classroom teaching which requires considerably more time than can reasonably be set aside for guidance and counselling intended to support the individual study of a distance education course. This may be harmful as such a course is meant to teach on its own, introducing new elements at the points where students are in a position to assimilate them, consolidating newly acquired knowledge by means of illustration, graphs, exercises of various kinds, summaries etc.

To be profitable, combinations of distance and oral tuition have proved to need complete integration based on systematic planning allocating the two approaches to well-defined tasks in the study process. Normally personal consultations along the lines of Oxbridge tutorials and discussions in groups, organized or formed spontaneously appear to be the most valuable supporting functions of face-to-face sessions apart from those that require special equipment (laboratories, machinery, computer terminals, etc.).

A successful combination of distance study and face-to-face instruction has been developed for so-called supervised correspondence study in schools, in companies and organizations including military units. Typical of supervised correspondence study is that the students work in libraries or classrooms and have a teacher available there as a resource person. He/she is their individual adviser and helper rather than their instructor, answers questions, explains when asked to, motivates, organizes group activities and administrates. The learning matter is presented throughout by the correspondence course, which may be based on several media, and the didactic communication with the correspondence school remains an essential element. Supervised correspondence study as applied today is the subject of Childs (1963), Holmberg (1973) and Weissbrot (1969). An early report on Australian experience is given in Rayner (1949).

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2

Overseas Correspondence Education Models

DR. KEVIN SMITH*

1. Objectives

The purposes of this paper are two fold :

(a) To provide a simple classification of correspondence education models operating in other countries.
(b) To outline a personal philosophy or a suggested rationale for educational planner to consider when developing or modifying a correspondence education system.

2. Some Overseas Models

I have visited correspondence education institutions, mainly at the university and college levels, in such countries as Great Britain, Denmark, Sweden, West Germany, The Netherlands, United States, Canada, New Zealand, Fiji, South Africa and Zambia. There are obvious gaps in this list but I believe that the following classification will cover the basic approaches that are to be found on a global scale.

Correspondence education models can be usefully divided into two district groups :

1. Institutions teaching full-time on campus students and

*A background paper for Regional Seminars on Correspondence Education held in Nov.-Dec. 1978 in India.

part-time off-campus students. I call these "dual purpose".

2. Institutions established to cater exclusively for off-campus students, generally part-time adult students. I call these "single purpose,"

Within these two groups I have identified the following basic models :

1. Dual Purpose	*2. Single Purpose*
(a) Extension/Correspondence	(a) Open Learning
(b) Extended Degree	(b) Individualised Learning
(c) Integrated	(c) Credit by Exam.

Models 1(a), 1(b), 2(b) and 2(c) are essentially American. The Integrated Model is to be found mainly in Australia and New Zealand although I "discovered" one example of this approach at the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada. The Open Learning Model is best known in the form of the British Open University but derivatives are now to be found in more than a dozen countries around the world.

3. Model Characteristics

It is not possible to describe the organisational details and methodologies of each model in a background paper such as this. I propose, therefore to provide only the barest outline of the characteristics that distinguish one model from another. I hope that discussion might allow for some elaboration and critical comments on their strengths and weaknesses.

1(a) Extension/ Correspondence

- Division of Correspondence studies only one of several functions of Dean of Continuing Education responsible for all forms of "outreach" programmes.
- Division of Correspondence Studies a Coordinating Unit to :
  — hire authors from resident faculty on contract outside experts,

— edit authors' material to fit correspondence education guidelines.
— hire part-time adjunct staff to mark assignments.
— maintain records (enrolments, fees, progress).
— provide information and advice.

- A complete degree program generally not available by correspondence.

1(b) Extended Degree

- Development of special programmes for off-campus adult students by resident faculty on an "overload" basis.
- Courses taught either by resident or adjunct faculty.
- More liberal admission criteria.
- More counselling services.
- Increased use of instructional technology.
- Credit for previous formal and informal learning experiences.
- Complete degree program available.

1(c) Integrated

- On campus programs taught by resident faculty to external students on "on-load" basis.
- Parity of standards : same courses, same exams taught by same staff to internal/external students.
- Printed study guides, audio cassettes, occasional personal contact sessions, library services are main elements in teaching process.
- Director of External Studies co-ordinates the systems.
- Several degree/diploma programmes available.
- Open admission for students.
- Systematic course development, often by course teams.

2(a) Open Learning
- Special curricula for adult students.
- Multi-media approach.
- Decentralised teaching/counselling services through part-time adjunct staff.
- Use of study centres.
- Economies of scale important.

2(b) Individualised learning
- "Student-centred" curriculum.
- Mentor assigned to each student.
- Portfolio of prior learning experiences.
- Development of a learning contract.
- Use of diverse resources for instruction.
- Evaluation of completed contract :
  — by student
  — by mentor
  — by Academic Review Committee.

2(c) Credit by Exam
- Several exam sessions annually in regional centres.
- Students may prepare for exams in diverse ways and through many institutions.
- Credit by exam for life experiences
- Regents External Degree Program (REDP) is the best known example.

4. A Rationale for Model Building

From my experiences as an external student, as a Director of the System in which I had previously studied and from my extensive observations of the world scene, I have developed a personal philosophy about correspondence education (external studies or distance education) which I have decided to call "Eight laws of Distance Education Dynamics". I provide the headings below :

The Eight Laws of Distance Education Dynamics

1. Law of Legitimacy
2. Law of Mainstream Activity
3. Law of Commitment

4. Law of Parity
5. Law of Interaction
6. Law of Variety
7. Law of Course Structure
8. Law of Co-ordination/Communication.

3

Development of Correspondence Courses in India—A Survey-Cum-Stocktaking*

PRINCIPAL RUDDAR DATT

The experiment of correspondence education was initiated in India by the University of Delhi in 1962. Subsequently in 1968, correspondence courses were started by the Panjabi University, Patiala and University of Rajasthan, Jaipur. In 1969, two more universities viz., Meerut and Mysore started these courses. But rapid expansion of these courses took place during 1970-71 to 1977-78. A good number of universities encouraged by the success in the pioneering universities established directorates/institutes of correspondence education. Many of them were also prompted by the fact that these courses were a profitable proposition and would, thus, add to the revenues of the Universities.

By 1977-78, a total of 20 universities have started correspondence courses. Table 1 gives an idea about the growth of enrolment in correspondence courses *vis-a-vis* growth of enrolment in regular colleges/university departments. By 1973-74, enrolment in all the Correspondence Courses in India was 48,392 and this nearly doubled itself to a figure of 96,231 in 1977-78. But as a proportion

*The paper was presented to the National Seminar on Correspondence Education held at Chandigarh on 9th Aug. 1979. Though the paper was presented a decade ago, the problems enumerated in it are still valid.

—*Editor*

of total enrolment in higher education, it improved from a figure of 2.1 per cent in 1973-74 to a figure of 3 6 per cent in 1977-78. In absolute terms, as against a total enrolment of 26.6 lakhs in higher education, the contribution of correspondence courses was barely 0.96 lakh. Obviously, the target of providing instruction to 20 per cent of total students in higher education through the system of Correspondence is still a distant dream.

TABLE 1

Growth of Enrolment in the Universities in India 1973-74 to 1977-78

Year	*Enrolment in Universities and Colleges*	*Enrolment in Correspondence Courses*	*Total enrolment*	*Percentage of total enrolment*
	(*a*)	(*b*)	(*a*+*b*)	$\left(\frac{b}{(a+b)} \times 100\right)$
1973-74	22,34,385	48,392	22,82,777	2.1
1974-75	22,66,541	52,036	24,18,577	2.2
1975-76	24,26,109	60,396	24,86,505	2.4
1976-77	24,31,563	86,094	25,17,657	3.4
1977-78	25,64,972	96,231	26,61,203	3.6

Note : Data include enrolment at the under-graduate, post-graduate and other graduate and other graduate and post-graduate diploma/certificate courses. The data do not include pre-university enrolment.

Source : Compiled from the University Grants Commission *Report for the year 1975-76, 1976-77 and 1977-78.*

However, data about stage-wise enrolment reveal (Refer table 2) that enrolment at the undergraduate level in correspondence education was just 2.51 per cent of total enrolment, but at the post-graduate level it was 11.92 per cent of total enrolment in 1977-78. This indicates a fast rate of growth of enrolment at the post-graduate level from 7,415 in 1973-74 to 31,636 in 1977-78. With the introduction of 10+2+3 system of education, enrolment in several correspondence course institutions threatened a declining trend. This prompted several correspondence courses to start post-graduate courses. Moreover, teachers in several correspondence courses were feeling frustrated by operating only at the undergraduate level. They also raised the demand for starting

Increase of enrolment in M.A. courses has been from 16 per cent in 1973-74 to 27.5 per cent in 1977-78. If to this are added M.Com., M.Ed., and M.Sc. courses, then enrolment in post-graduate courses increased from 17.0 per cent in 1973-74 to 34.9 per cent in 1977-78. Besides this, B.Ed. and B.G.L. courses have also been introduced.

A close examination of the correspondence courses data reveals that most universities have taken up popular subjects. The approach has been not to teach all subjects with the help of this technique of education, but only to teach subjects which can attract sufficient enrolment. They are Hindi, Economics, Political Science, History, Sanskrit, Kannada (Mysore), Tamil (Madurai), Sociology, Public Administration. It is heartening to note that these subjects have been introduced in correspondence courses. But there is conspicuous absence of science education. But for the Bombay University which had a paltry enrolment of 44 students in M.Sc., there is no university* which conducts science courses. Secondly, even in other areas, subjects such as Mathematics, Psychology, Urdu, Bengali, Philosophy, Business Management have not been taken up. One can only hope that as confidence in correspondence education improves, these subjects will also be started at the post-graduate level.

The regional distribution of correspondence courses is given in table 4. The data reveal that five correspondence courses viz., Delhi, Madurai, Mysore, Panjab and Rajasthan accounted for 77.3 per cent of total enrolment in all correspondence courses in 1975-76. This figure increased to 81.0 per cent in 1977-78. This indicates that correspondence courses are not evenly spread all over the country. For instance, states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, Madhya Pradesh which account for a very significant proportion of the Indian population either are devoid of a correspondence course or have a correspondence unit with a very small enrolment. The situation, therefore, calls for remedial action.

Viable and Non-viable Units

A correspondence course unit should have a minimum

*Annamalai University has since started M.Sc. courses in on any subjects through correspondence.—*Editor*

TABLE 4

Enrolment in Correspondence Courses in India (1973-74 to 1977-78)

Name of the University	Total Number of Students				
	1973-74	*1974-75*	*1975-76*	*1976-77*	*1977-78*
1. Andhra	527	643	1,412	1,580	1,681
	(1.1)	(1.2)	(2.3)	(1.8)	(1.7)
2. Bhopal	—	—	121	472	919
			(0.2)	(0.5)	(1.0)
3. Bombay	323	677	1,311	2,956	3,130
	(0.7)	(1.3)	(2.2)	(3.4)	(3.2)
4. Delhi	14,764	14,348	13,722	13,474	13,203
	(30.5)	(27.6)	(22.7)	(15.6)	(13.7)
5. Himachal Pradesh	4,535	5,027	5,525	4,525	5,009
	(9.4)	(9.7)	(9.1)	(5.3)	(5.2)
6. Meerut	3,132	1,970	1,095	950	850
	(6.5)	(3.8)	(1.8)	(1.1)	(0.9)
7. Madurai	5,222	8,716	11,959	24,268	27,276
	(10.8)	(16.7)	(19.8)	(28.2)	(28.3)
8. Mysore	3,213	5,173	8,078	13,780	18,766
	(6.6)	(10.0)	(13.4)	(16.0)	(19.5)
9. Panjab	8,843	8,595	8,155	9,703	8,903
	(18.3)	(16.5)	(13.5)	(11.3)	(9.3)
10. Panjabi	2,578	2,363	1,781	1,891	1,838
	(5.3)	(4.5)	(2.9)	(2.2)	(1.9)
11. Rajasthan	4,913	3,962	4,750	8,280	9,840
	(10.1)	(7.6)	(7.9)	(9.6)	(10.2)
12. Sri Venka-teswara	342	562	699	582	625
	(0.7)	(1.1)	(1.1)	(0.7)	(0.7)
13. Utkal	—	—	1,596	3,373	3,281
			(2.6)	(3.9)	(3.4)
14. Jammu	—	—	—	—	354
					(0.4)
15. C.I.E.F.L. (Hyderabad)	—	—	192	260	583
			(0.3)	(0.3)	(0.6)
Total	48,392	52,036	60,396	86,094	96,231
			(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)

Note : Figures in brackets are percentages of total enrolment.

Source : Compiled from data provided in University Grants Commission Report for the year 1975-76, 1976-77 and 1977-78.

enrolment of 5,000 to become viable. Since three years may be considered the gestation period for a correspondence unit to mature, it would be relevant to study the reasons why some units have continued to attract very poor enrolment. The minimum expenditure involved in getting reading materials printed, organisation of personal contact programmes and establishing library-cum-study centres has to be incurred. It is, therefore, necessary that the size of the unit should become viable. For this, it would be prudent that the UGC while granting permission for starting new courses sees to it that such courses are not available in another unit very close-by.

Since the concept of economies of scale is very relevant in correspondence education, its planning should take this factor into account.

A detailed study of the trends of enrolment (see appendix I) data reveal that there are some units in which enrolment has declined sharply. As against an enrolment of 3,132 in 1973-74, the correspodence course, Meerut had an enrolment of only 850 in 1977-78. Similarly, there was a declining trend of enrolment in Punjabi University, Patiala from 2,578 in 1973-74 to 1,838 in 1977-78. As against them, the Correspondence Course at Mysore and Madurai have shown very sharp increase of enrolment. The Mysore unit had an enrolment of only 3,213 in 1973-74 and it has jumped to an enrolment level of 18,766 in 1977-78—an increase by 485 per cent. The Madurai unit increased its enrolment from 5,222 in 1973-74 to 27,276 in 1977-78– an increase of 422 per cent. Both these units have crossed the UGC ceiling of 15,000 suggested in the guidelines from the point of managerial efficiency. There are, however, units which have become static in enrolment during the last 3 years. They are Andhra, Himachal Pradesh, Patiala, Venkateswara, and Utkal.

From the analysis given above, the need for the co-ordination of correspondence education at the national level stands out very clearly.

Average fee income and average expenditure per student

Table 5 gives the number of students, average fee per student and average expenditure per students for some Correspondence Courses. The data reveal wide variations in average expenditure per student. Several factors account for the differences in expenditure per student. (Refer table 5). They are :

TABLE 5

Some Important Indicators about Income and Expenditure of Different Correspondence Courses in India

	No. of students	*Average fee per student (Rs.)*	*Average Expenditure per student (Rs.)*	*Av. fees income as per cent of Av. Exp.*
Delhi				
1975-76	13,722	228.0	316.2	72.1
1976-77	13,474	209.4	326.9	64.0
1977-78	13,203	244.0	370.1	65.9
Chandigarh				
1975-76	10,521	325.9	321.9	101.2
1976-77	12,201	341.9	324.2	105.4
1977-78	10,757	358.0	460.5	77.7
Madurai				
1975-76	18,196	n.a.	160.8	—
1976-77	30,977	n.a.	120.3	—
1977-78	32,421	n.a.	170.8	—
CIEFL, Hyderabad				
1975-76	192	n.a.	559.2	—
1976-77	246	n.a.	519.7	—
1977-78	554	n.a.	329.7	—
Mysore				
1977-78	19,748	n.a.	138.3	—
Kurukshetra				
1977-78	1,159	312.4	216.0	144.6
Patiala				
1975-76	2,445	334.1	538.0	62.1
1976-77	2,709	359.5	678.2	53.0
1977-78	2,069	618.1	994.8	62.1

Note : Figures of enrolment used in this table also take into account enrolment in pre-university course This has been done because it was not possible to segregate the expenditure done for running courses at PUC level from that incurred for other courses.

(i) Total enrolment in a correspondence unit. The larger the enrolment, there is a likelihood that it will tend to reduce cost per student.

(ii) The number of media in which instruction is provided. The availability of these media of instruction viz., Hindi, English and Panjabi does tend to raise costs. Reading materials have to be prepared in three languages, personal contact classes also have to be arranged in three media. Similarly, the availability of two media in small units like Andhra, Meerut, Utkal also tend to increase unit costs of correspondence education.

(iii) Another important factor is the number of full-time members of the teaching faculty. Whereas some correspondence courses have a very small full-time faculty. others have a large full-time faculty. It is more a question of the philosophy of organisation of correspondence education. (Refer table 6).

Data given in table 6 reveals that whereas Delhi had 67 full-time members of the teaching staff for an enrolment of 13,203, Madurai had a total teaching faculty of 96 for an enrolment of 32,421 while it was conducting a

TABLE 6

Strength of Teaching staff in Different Correspondence Courses in 1977-78

	No. of Students	*Teaching Staff*				
		Professors	*Readers*	*Lecturers*	*Part-time lect.*	*Total*
Delhi	13,203	—	17*	50	—	67
Mysore	19,748	—	1	15	13	29
Madurai	32,421	3	15	77	1	96
CIEFL	554	1	—	3	—	4
Kurukshetra	1,159	—	—	6	—	6
Panjab (Chandigarh)	10,757	—	12	76	—	88
Panjabi (Patiala)	2,069	—	4	20	31	55

Note : *In Delhi, 17 teachers were working as senior lecturers. They were in the grade of Rs. 1,100-1,600.

much larger number of courses. Strangely enough, Mysore with an enrolment of 19,748 had only 29 members of the teaching staff, out of whom 13 were part-time lecturers. Chandigarh and Patiala had a larger faculty *vis-a-vis* their enrolment. Such variations are bound to affect unit costs of correspondence education.

(iv) Grant of fee concessions on the same basis as are obtaining in regular colleges, or the total absence of fee concessions also affects unit costs of education.

(v) Duration of personal contact programme—a longer duration which is very desirable does help to raise cost of correspondence education.

(vi) Organisation of library-cum-study centres.

(vii) The number and type of courses run by a correspondence unit also determine the unit costs. For instance, the teaching staff requirements at the post-graduate level are much greater than at the under-graduate level. As against it, the increase in enrolment expected is not very large. Consequently unit costs rise. The sharp increase in salaries in Punjab, (Chandigarh), Panjabi (Patiala) is the result of the introduction of post-graduate courses.

(viii) Very low rates of remuneration for writing reading materials, a large contingent of temporary non-academic staff, a large number of part-time teachers account for the extremely low unit costs in correspondence course (Mysore). As against a figure of Rs. 370 for Delhi and Rs. 460 for Chandigarh for 1977-78, the unit cost in Mysore was only Rs. 138. (The rates of payment for lesson writing in Mysore are : post-graduate lessons : Rs. 75/-, under-graduate lessons Rs. 45/- and PUC lessons Rs. 30/-.)

Differences in fee income received from the students also show variations. Average fee charged per student was the lowest in Delhi. This is because the level of fees in the University of Delhi charged for Correspondence Course students is nearly the same as that charged from regular college/university students. Besides this, 20 per cent of the students can be granted fee concession under the university rules. In other correspondence courses, fee are generally higher.

The Need for State Support to Correspondence Education

In recent years, the myth that correspondence courses are self-financing has been exploded. Delhi, Chandigarh and Patiala have already gone in the red. And in case, the UGC guidelines which aim at the maintenance of standards are to be implemented, some more correspondence courses are also likely to go in the red in the near future since expenditures are increasing for a variety of reasons given above. The basic issue is : Should correspondence education be treated merely an alternative technique or as a viable alternative technique ? It is the latter alternative which needs to be developed. There is a welcome change in the attitude of the UGC and a growing realisation has came to prevail in the Commission that the maintenance of acaedmic standards, the expansion of student services, the creation of infra-structures would help to reduce the disadvantages to correspondence students.

However, the attitude of the state governments still continues to be conservative and not conducive to the development of the correspondence technique of education. The correspondence courses are required to be self-financing, if not yielding surplus. Obviously, they are forced to give under-nourished diet to their students. An effort should be made to bring about this change in attitude so that state governments also provide support to correspondence education.

The Role of Universities and University Teaching Departments

The university teaching departments, the UGC guidelines insist, should co-operate for the organization of teaching, more especially at the post-graduate level, so that teaching standards are maintained. Some co-operation has been forthcoming, but the attitude has been that of the "big brother". Much less contribution is provided in the organisation of teaching, preparation of reading materials, conduct of personal contact programmes. However, there is greater interference in the selection of lesson writers, and other staff required for organisation of contact programmes, response sheet correction etc. Some university departments do not permit the starting of post-graduate courses on the plea that they will become competitive units to the University departments. This attitude of fear and rivalry inhibits the development and expansion of correspondence courses. For years together, there is resistance

to the starting of new courses. The present university structure insists on the approval of university heads of departments before a scheme can be launched.

The University bodies viz., academic council, syndicates/ Executive Councils and Senates/Courts pre-occupied with their problems hardly have time to discuss the problems of correspondence education. As a consequence, there is a great neglect by the University to study the problems of correspondence education in depth.

In an under-developed country like India correspondence courses are expected to meet the needs of the disadvantaged sections of the society. The necessitates experimentation and innovation. Two universities viz., Madurai and Mysore started the experiment of the open university scheme. The Mysore University permits a person to join the under-graduate course without any educational qualifications if he/she has attained the age of 25 years and a post-graduate course if he/she has attained the age of 35 years. This experiment has benefited quite a number of people, but the acceptance of such a degree has not become an established fact in our society so far. The sooner it is done, the better.

In many other universities, rigidities in the University eligibility conditions prevent a significant number of otherwise competent candidates to seek admission in correspondence courses. The romantic ideas given in the UGC guidelines that there should be scope for innovation and experimentation cannot become a practical proposition if the rigidities of the conventional university structure continue. Since the decision-making authorities are guided by considerations other than the development of correspondence education, the university structure itself becomes an obstacle to innovation and experimentation.

The situation can be remedied in two ways :

(a) Either every university should have a faculty to deal with the problems of correspondence education;

(b) Or, the country should have an open university to which all the correspondence course units should be affiliated. Such a University should be specifically charged with the responsibility of correspondence education.

Another serious problem of correspondence education is the frequent changes in syllabi. The correspondence courses being tagged to conventional universities have to accept the syllabi of the universities. Sometimes, those syllabi are received very late and this delays the preparation of reading materials. Moreover, frequent changes of syllabi upset correspondence course schedules seriously. It would be, therefore, desirable if an attempt is made to develop a national syllabus which may be revised every five years.

The absence of a regular co-ordinating agency is one of the most serious problems of correspondence education. The UGC Standing Committee on Part-time and Own Education does meet once or twice in a year, but it has not been able to make a serious analysis of the problems and work out solutions. A more permanent machinery to analyse the problems is the need of the hour.

APPENDIX I

Growth Of Enrolment In Correspondence Courses Run By Different Universities In India

University	*Year*	*B.A.*	*B.Com.*	*M.A.*	*M.Com.*	*B.Ed.*	*M.Ed.*	*B.GL*	*Others*	*Total*
1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*
Andhra										
	1973-74	225	302	—	—	—	—	—	—	527
	1974-75	283	360	—	—	—	—	—	—	643
	1975-76	678	734	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,412
	1976-77	771	809	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,580
	1977-78	992	689	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,681
Bombay										
	1973-74	208	115	—	—	—	—	—	—	323
	1974-75	411	266	—	—	—	—	—	—	677
	1975-76	636	191	266	177	—	—	—	41	1,311
	1976-77	1,073	706	623	510	—	—	—	44	2,956
	1977-78	1,073	706	728	596	—	—	—	—	3,103
Bhopal										
	1973-74	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	1974-75	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	1975-76	96	25	—	—	—	—	—	—	121
	1976-77	386	86	—	—	—	—	—	—	472
	1977-78	747	172	—	—	—	—	—	—	919

(Contd.)

APPENDIX—I (*Contd.*)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Delhi										
	1973-74	14,764	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	14,764
	1974-75	14,348	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	14,348
	1975-76	7,048	6,674	—	—	—	—	—	—	13,722
	1976-77	6,544	6,930	—	—	—	—	—	—	13,474
	1977-78	6,302	6,630	271	—	—	—	—	—	13,203
Himachal Pradesh										
	1973-74	487	—	3,336	—	—	712	—	—	4,535
	1974-75	791	—	3,713	—	—	523	—	—	5,027
	1975-76	819	—	2,912	1,024	—	770	—	—	5,525
	1976-77	818	—	1,874	809	—	1,024	—	—	4,525
	1977-78	867	—	1,967	727	—	1,448	—	—	5,009
Jammu										
	1973-74	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	1974-75	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	1975-76	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	1976-77	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	1977-78	73	50	—	—	231	—	—	—	354
Madurai										
	1973-74	3,281	1,931	—	—	—	—	—	—	5,222
	1974-75	4,495	4,221	—	—	—	—	—	—	8,716

	1975-76	5,784	6,175	—	—	—	—	—	11,959
	1976-77	6,293	7,186	5,838	1,704	—	—	3,247	— 24,268
	1977-78	6,054	7,164	8,671	2,506	—	—	2,881	— 27,276
Meerut									
	1973-74	3,132	—	—	—	—	—	—	— 3,132
	1974-75	1,970	—	—	—	—	—	—	— 1,970
	1975-76	1,095	—	—	—	—	—	—	— 1,095
	1976-77	950	—	—	—	—	—	—	— 950
	1977-78	850	—	—	—	—	—	—	— 850
Mysore									
	1973-74	2,407	206	600	—	—	—	—	— 3,213
	1974-75	3,008	243	1,071	—	—	—	851	— 5,173
	1975-76	3,419	348	1,365	—	—	726	2,220	— 8,078
	1976-77	6,846	793	3,389	—	—	1,758	994	— 13,780
	1977-78	10,789	1,432	5,063	—	—	499	983	— 18,766
Panjab									
	1973-74	8,503	340	—	—	—	—	—	— 8,843
	1974-75	8,037	558	—	—	—	—	—	— 8,595
	1975-76	7,447	708	—	—	—	—	—	— 8,155
	1976-77	6,165	686	2,852	—	—	—	—	— 9,703
	1977-78	4,770	724	3,409	—	—	—	—	— 8,903

(Contd.)

APPENDIX—I (*Contd.*)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Punjabi										
	1973-74	2,578	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2,578
	1974-75	2,117	—	246	—	—	—	—	—	2,363
	1975-76	1,428	—	353	—	—	—	—	—	1,781
	1976-77	1,083	—	808	—	—	—	—	—	1,891
	1977-78	939	—	899	—	—	—	—	—	1,838
Rajasthan										
	1973-74	—	1,434	3,479	—	—	—	—	—	4,913
	1974-75	—	669	3,293	—	—	—	—	—	3,962
	1975-76	—	957	3,793	—	—	—	—	—	4,750
	1976-77	760	1,733	5,007	780	—	—	—	—	8,280
	1977-78	1,128	1,942	5,426	1,344	—	—	—	—	9,840
Sri Venkateswara										
	1973-74	342	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	342
	1974-75	562	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	562
	1975-76	237	462	—	—	—	—	—	—	699
	1976-77	186	396	—	—	—	—	—	—	582
	1977-78	239	386	—	—	—	—	—	—	625
Utkal										
	1973-74	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	1974-75	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

1975-76	1,596	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,596
1976-77	3,373	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3,373
1977-78	3,281	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3,281
C.I.E.F.L. Hyderabad									
1973-74	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1974-75	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1975-76	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	192	192
1976-77	—	—	14	—	—	—	—	246	260
1977-78	—	—	29	—	—	—	—	554	583

Institutes of Correspondence Courses in India : Courses Offered

S. No.	*Name*	*Year of Establishment*	*Under graduate*	*Post graduate*	*Others*
1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*
1.	School of Correspondence Courses, University of Delhi	1962	B.A. B.Com. B.Com. (Hons.)	M.A. in Hindi and Pol. Science	
2.	Directorate of Correspondence Courses, Punjabi University, Patiala	1968	Pre-Univ. B.A.	M.A. in English History, Pol. Science & Punjabi	Gyani Punjabi Praveshika
3.	Institute of Correspondence Studies, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur	1968	B.A. B.Com. & B.Ed.	M.A. in History, Pol. Sc., Economics Pub. Admn., Hindi Sociology, M.Com. in Acct. and Business Stat	Certificate Course in Lib. Sc., Diploma course in Journalism, Diploma course in Tourism & Hotel Management
4.	Institute of Correspondence Courses, University of Mysore	1969	PUC, B.A. B.Com. B.G.L. & B.Ed.	M.A. in English History, Sociology, Pol. Sc. Kannada	Certificate course in Kannada, Certificate course in Journalism, P.G. Diploma in English P.G. Diploma in Kannada

5. Institute of Correspondence Courses, Meerut University Meerut.	1969	B.A.	—	—
6. Institute of Correspondence Courses, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai	1971	Pre-Univ. B.A. & B.Com.	M.A. in History, Economics, Tamil, English, M. Com.	B.G.L.
7. Directorate of Correspondence Courses, Himachal Pradesh University, Simla.	1971	Pre-Univ. B.A.	M.A. in English Pol. Sc., Hindi, History, Sanskrit, Economics, M.Com. & M.Ed.	—
8. Directorate of Correspondence Courses, Panjab University, Chandigarh	1971	Pre-Univ. B.A., B. Com.	M.A. in English History, Pol. Science, Economics, Public Administration	Dip. in Office Organisation.
9. Directorate of Correspondence Courses, Bombay, University, Bombay	1971	Inter Arts Inter Com. B.A. & B.Com.	M.A. M.Com.	Dip. in Financial Management, Dip in Operation Research for Management—Dip. in Higher Education.

(*Contd.*)

(*Contd.*)

1	2	3	4	5	6
10.	Department of Extension Education, Punjab Agricultural University.	1971	—	—	Integrated courses in Agriculture (for farmers) and Home Management and Family Life course (for ladies)
11.	Institute of Correspondence Courses, Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati	1972	B.A. & B.Com.	—	—
12.	School of Correspondence Courses, Andhra University Waltair.	1972	Pre-Univ. B.A. & B.Com.	M.A. in Economics & M.Com.	—
13.	Central Institute of English & Foreign Language, Hyderabad.	1972	—	—	Post-graduate certificate course in Teaching of English.
14.	Directorate of Correspondence Courses, Utkal, University, Bhubneshwar	1975	Inter Arts & B.A.	—	I.Com.
15.	Institute of Correspondence Courses, Bhopal University, Bhopal	1975	B.A. & B.Com.	—	—

16. Institute of Correspondence Courses, University of Kashmir, Srinagar	1976	B.A., B.Com. & B.Ed.	—	Hindi & Urdu courses for school teachers.
17. Institute of Correspondence Courses, University of Jammu, Jammu.	1976	B,A., B.Com. & B.Ed.	—	L.L.B.
18. Directorate of Correspondence Courses, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra.	1976	Pre-Univ. & B.A.	—	—
19. Institute of Correspondence Courses, University of Kerala, Trivandrum.	1977	Pre-Degree	—	—
20. Institute of Correspondence Courses, Osmania University, Hyderabad.	1977	B.A. & B.Com.	—	—
21. Regional College of Education Ajmer.	1968	B.Ed.	—	—
22. Patrachar Vidyalaya Directorate of Education, Delhi Administration, Timarpur, Delhi-7	1968	—	—	Sr. School & Secondary School.

4

The Need for Non-Traditional Courses in Distance Education

DR. S. BHATNAGAR

Primary devised in the context of the ever-growing consciousness on the part of the people all over the world to acquire more and more knowledge, the institutes of correspondence education at least in this country have turned out in the course of time as an additional stream (supplementing the effort of the conventional colleges and unversities) preparing men and women for their bachelors and masters degrees. Critics might raise their fingers and point out that with the emergence of these institutes it has become easier to get degrees and that consequent thereupon the value of these degrees has been depreciated. There may be some weight in their argument but the fact stands and which by no means can be overlooked that these institutes have enabled numerous persons to realise their life's ambition to get a university degree and good many among them might have been able to improve their career prospects. In a developing country like India which has been caught in a strange phenomenon of population and education explosion and the lack of adequate resources, correspondence education medium is the only viable alternative. Moreover, it serves as a suitable and handy institutional mechanism by which the hitherto elite-dominated educational system could be renovated

*This paper was presented to the national seminar on correspondence Education in Chandigarh in August 1979.

and thus made to serve the needs and interests of the widely scattered, economically handicapped and socially depressed sections of society who otherwise cannot hope to peep into the highly-walled colleges and universities. Correspondence education, unless properly conceived, imaginatively planned and efficiently managed can not only prove to be an agent of modernization but also an effective tool in the armoury of socialism.

In India, these institutes have unfortun ately concentrated their whole attention on helping people get degrees. It is only in a very limited way and that too in recent years that some deviation from the traditional track has taken place. But, by and large, these institutes were conceived to serve only the limited needs of the people. To look into the circumstances that led to the birth of some of the pioneering institutes in this country, some institutes were established to absorb the overflow from colleges, some were set-up to help the university to offset the financial loss, resulting from the disaffiliation of good many colleges and somewhere (surprising enough) these institutes were created either to quieten the inconvenient element or to accomodate the highly convenient allies of the decision-makers. Conceived with such narrow objectives, these institutes were hardly expected to go beyond the beaten track.

Two more factors were responsible to bind them down to them conventional type of functioning. In the first place, the ill-conceived policy of the government of continuing linking the degree with all types of jobs in the country, from a clerk to an I.A.S. Officer,[1] has fired every youngman and youngwoman with the ambition to get a degree. And since there is too much of unemployment in the country, people go on recklessly annexing degrees, one after the other (B.A. : M.A., LL.B, B.Ed.) with the distant hope that any of those degrees, or all of them combinedly might one day help them get a job or a better job. To cape it all, some state governments instead of discouraging their employees from getting degrees and thereby spreading dissatisfaction against the job they held (and consequent indiscipline) they provide incentive to them in the form of additional increments.[2] The cumulative impact of all these factors is that people must run after the degrees. In such a situation, more of colleges would be set up and when that becomes difficult due to the paucity of resources, correspondence institutes must come up and cater to

this degree-oriented educational needs of the people.

The second factor that is perhaps equally significant is that the emergence of a multi-faculty institute of correspondence education on a university campus and having on its staff a large faculty, comprising mostly lecturers and occasionally readers as well, would obviously raise the status of its director/principal *vis-a-vis* the heads/chairman of other departments. In case the director/principal happens to be in the senate or syndicate of the University concerned, then the gap of status between him and his counterparts becomes wider still. If, unfortunately, he is not very highly qualified then the jealously of the latter toward him and his 'empire' knows no bounds. In such a state of affairs, the latter in particular and other decision-makers in general would certainly not like him to act imaginatively and diversify the programmes of his institute in other directions. They would, instead, want him to continue catering to the undergraduate or at the most post-graduate needs of the people so that he may not expand his 'empire'.

One more factor may be added to this list. To do the traditional courses is comparatively an easier task. For, the norms governing the academic and the administrative frame-work of the under and the post-graduate study programmes, are readily available and can easily be adapted to the requirements of a correspondence institute. The decision-makers at the university and government levels, conservative as they always happen to be, also do not find it difficult to clear the study programme of the correspondence institute especially when these are tailored according to the traditional norms of the University/Government. But when a non-traditional type of programme is to be undertaken, obviously new norms shall have to be worked out. Possibly, the new programme might need a bigger financial outlay. There may also be needed a more highly qualified faculty to run it. In view of the newness of the proposed programme, on the one hand, and the paucity of talent in the country, on the other, a larger number of senior positions might have to be created in order to attract suitably qualified personnel. Lesson-writers might have to be paid more and in this way a number of bold decisions of an unusual nature might have to be taken. The University authorities which too are required to function under numerous types of constraints (despite the autonomy that universities in India have

been conceded), may not be prepared to pick up enough courage to take these decisions, especially with regard to the correspondence iustitute (for the department they may) which are still looked down upon with a sense of suspicion and distrust and, hence dubbed as second grade constituents of the University. In the fitness of the situation the directors re-concile themselves with the under and post-graduate study programmes and do not become bold or imaginative to go beyond the traditionally demarcated path of the university studies.

These are some of the deep-seated reasons which have been responsible for binding down the institutes of correspondence education to the traditional courses.

II

The educational system of a country always reflects the needs of the nation and is also accordingly tailored to suitably meet those needs. Macaulay designed an educational system in keeping with the goals and requirements of the alien regime and also to suit to the politico-economic philosophy of those times. When after independence, the nation embarked on an ambitious programme of scientific and technological advance of the country, we introduced into our educational system a new emphasis on the teaching of science. Consequent thereupon, numerous science, technology, engineering, medical and research institutes came to be established all over the country. Later on, when the revolution of rising expectations combined with all round enlightenment began to sweep the length and breadth of the land, correspondence institutes were conceived as an ideal instrument to help provide university education on a massive scale and at a comparatively lesser cost and inconvenience. Once again, the nation finds itself standing at another critical juncture of history. Population explosion has already taken place. From 350 million in 1947, we have multiplied ourselves to 630 million in 1978 and by the turn of the century (or perhaps earlier) we are likely to cross the highly dangerous mark of 1,000 million. How frightening seems to be the picture. Side by side, millions of youngmen and women, after having received higher education, roam in the streets without job. Their number too is ever-swelling. The question that we must pose to ourselves is, how are we going to face the fury of the angry

youth ? Don't we realise that unless early steps are taken to arrest the rate of deterioration, all of us will be swept down the gutter ? This situation demands that we must, in the first place, gradually decrease our emphasis on traditional courses and proliferate our programme in new directions. By decreasing emphasis on traditional courses we can to some extent arrest the reckless pursuit for ill productive university degrees, though to divert our youth from degree-oriented educational system needs bold decisions in many more directions and at very high levels.

A vast unexplored field lies ahead for us to successfully cover. Our effort to handle job-oriented courses has so far been quite limited. Some of the important courses which have been touched upon here and there relate to library service, office management, marketing techniques, educational technology (in the form of B.Ed.), etc. etc. No where attempts were made to impart courses in banking, accountancy, audit, secretarial practice, taxation (income tax, sales tax, property tax practices), architecture, engineering, municipal administration, and such other numerous fields. The impression that not much can be achieved through correspondence medium has been amply dispelled partly by our own effort (we have admirably proved that our students can successfully completed against those of the conventional colleges) and partly by a host of other institutes working in India and abroad. Reference may be made to the correspondence courses in engineering (AMIE) and cost accountancy, institutes by private organizations in our own country; and to the Open University of the United Kingdom which has been imparting instruction in a large number of non-conventional type of courses. If we have will and determination and also adequate resources, we can equally rise to the occasion. Our tools and techniques can be as refined as others may be. When the Open University (in England) can provide laboratory kit to each and every individual student, we can at least set-up a chain of study centres, adequately equipped with books, laboratories, guided advice of the teachers and the like, where students may come, seek guidance and do practical exercises. What we shall have to do is to have active inter-institutional co-ordination so that duplication of effort may be avoided in the sense that no two institutes in a region may give same courses and also that nowhere should be set-up parallel guided study centres.

I delineate the scope of new courses; in the first place it may be pointed out that numerous persons after having passed out of the educational institutes join such services as medicine, engineering, agriculture, architecture, teaching etc. etc. They get so much absorbed in their professional pursuits that they do not keep abreast of the developments in their field. In this century knowledge in every field is expanding with so great a speed that if one does not keep himself in touch with latest developments, he is bound to lag behind and his knowledge would get obsolete soon. It is therefore highly imperative that those persons living in far off places as they do, must be continuously fed with the changes and developments in their respectives fields. It is here that correspondence courses do a worthwhile service. These institutes may open courses in these disciplines and cater to the academic needs of these people. Someone might like to point out that there already exist professional associations, many of which have even instituted journals and they thereby act as clearing-house of knowledge. But question arises how many of these professionals enrol themselves as members of these association and how many of the members read these journals. The same logic may also be extended to the correspondence courses. True, the response of the people would be definitely too poor especially when the demands of these courses would be too great in terms of both money and time. But the decision-makers at the Governmental level may be pursuaded to institute some sort of incentives in the form of additional movements, efficiency bars, rapid promotions and additional qualifications for selection in the higher grades, so on and so forth. To pursuade the Government, though difficult, is by no means impossible. The desirability of tagging these courses with promotion to higher jobs can be stressed on the ground of their contribution to the improvement of job skills. Already, the Government has instituted on a massive scale the programme of in-service training through refresher courses, seminars, summer schools and the like. These courses can also be treated as an extension of this programme. To get recognition for these courses at the hands of the Government may not, therefore pose much of a difficulty.

There is another unexplored field wnere the correspondence education can also profitably undertake an adventure. It is the world of the housewives. In India, numerous young girls settle

down after their marriage as housewives. Their educational career is thus disrupted, for, the constraints of the household work and social customs do not allow them to continue it. Most of them (especially those who come of the richer and more sophisticated sections of society and those who have a comparatively less busy routine) still feel interested in academics. The institutes of correspondence education can also enable them to keep themselves in touch with the developments in their respective fields of interest. In the case of this category, we shall have to be less rigid about their passing formal examinations. For, the housewives, will not be keen to go in for degrees or diplomas. Their interest would be to keep themselves in touch with the developments in their respective fields. They can thus be fed with literature at regular intervals. Then at the top of it all, the institutes of correspondence courses should increasingly interest themselves with job-oriented courses. They should not only undertake such courses as help people obtain a job (e.g. library science, educational training, secretarial practice, etc.) but also help the in-service people to improve their career (e.g. M.Ed., banking examinations, audit and accountancy, etc.) There are innumerable private teaching shops which prepare candidates for various types competitive examination to the I.A.S. competition). Ill-equipped and poorly staffed as they are, these academics provide a sub-standard type of coaching. If the correspondence institutes undertake this work, the quality of instruction would improve and so also the capability of the candidates to more effectively take part in the competitions.

To sum up, there is a wide field lying quite unexplored ahead where the institutes of correspondence education can make their impact. At the same time, a realisation is also dawning (though very gradually) that we should make our educational system more productive and worthwhile and, conversely, wean away our youth from the rat race for degrees. In such a situation, the institutes of correspondence education can make a mark. What is, however, needed is, imaginative planning' bold and unconventional type of decisions and decision-making, effective and meaningful inter-institutional and inter-university co-ordination, and, above all, well-planned follow-up action and periodic reviewing of the progress (in terms of effectiveness) of various programmes.

Notes and References

1. How funny does it look that to be an Assistant Inspector of Police (a job having not much to do with academics) one should be a graduate and also the some qualification for sitting in the Central Services competitive services. Again, if one does not happen to be a first class graduate, one cannot get a clerkship in a bank but for an I.A.S. officer one may even be a third division B.A.
2. One fails to understand how a B.A./M.A. degree will help a steno typist or a clerk to become more efficient. Finding his old grey-haired boss just a matriculate, he instead, would develop dis-satisfaction with his job and think of going out.

PART TWO

USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

5

Educational Technology in the Distance Learning System

PROF. (MRS.) VIJAYA MULAY

1. It is now increasingly getting accepted that there is a lot more involved than writing lessons/materials for correspondence Education and that Educational Technology can offer some excellent inputs for making distance learning systems efficient.

2. The three basic tenets of Educational Technology are systems approach, emphasis on learning and programmed materials and utilisation of available or potentially available resources. The systems approach and using available resources ensure that only such alternatives are used as would be effective and efficient in reaching objectives which again are carefully identified after formative evaluation; systems approach further ensures that at every level there are checks to find out whether the system is succeeding and if it is not, there would be enough flexibility in the system to make mid-course corrections. The emphasis on learning and use of programmed materials are particularly useful for students who are not face to face with teacher and who are moving at their own pace.

3. Even though the educational technologist may have no expertise in the subject matter of lessons, the expertise and discipline of the Systems Approach that he brings to bear on the distance learning system are critical at every level of operation i.e. before, during and after. He can meaningfully assist the planners and academics of the system to decide what to teach, how to teach,

how to sequence, what to test, when to test and how to interpret results, by using different kinds of well tried techniques.

Since some of these techniques are not known widely in this country, a few examples are given below :

(a) *Master Performer Analysis* : It is used to decide the ideal point for directing activities by observing the performance of an expert in the assigned task.

(b) *Epistemological analysis* : This takes into account the structure of knowledge and shows which key concepts stand together. The overt behaviourial objectives at which educationists aim, have as their basis, covert theoretical knowledge. It is essential that the right sort of underlying knowledge gets included in the course to achieve behaviourial objectives laid down.

(c) *Content Criteria* : This is useful for both preparation of correspondence course as well as for writing of lessons in a sequential manner. The criteria tell as to which concepts should come first and which should come later.

(d) *Error Analysis* : It is used for avoiding errors—by finding how an expert avoids errors and making students learn to avoid them.

(e) *Critical Incidence Technique* : This is used for finding the break points in a task which materially change the character of the task e.g, a nursing student keeping a diary of a patient's day noting what pleased/disturbed him, so as to avoid unwholesome happenings.

(f) *Performance Insistence* : This concept is used for ensuring that critical rather than admiring attitudes develop. traditionally we hardly do any history or philosophy; in our courses, we generally admire.

(g) *Media Analysis* : Most distance learning systems use more than one medium. Text and teacher are the traditional media to which are added self learning kits, programmed materials, graphics, radio, t.v. etc. Depending on availability of these resources, the educational technologist helps in what could go in different media keeping in view the strengths and weaknesses of each medium, how all the inputs could be integrated, what can be used for recapitulation, for preventing unlearning and for

positive transfer.

(h) *Readability Analysis and Time Analysis* : These show what are the reading norms for the target group. What would be the minimum/optimum attention span for different media, what are the average condition and time available for home study etc.

(i) *Milestone Analysis/Item Analysis/Concurrence of Error Analysis* : These techniques can be used for deciding what to test, when to test and how to interpret results so that total and comprehensive learning takes place. The milestones could be chapter end or section end depending on the topic and target group. It could also mean deciding which questions are basic and important and ensuring that they are not lost sight of. The item analysis and concurrence of error analysis help in finding out whether the faulty answer is due to not understanding just one basic concept albeit presented in its various aspects or many concepts.

4. The list given above is a suggestive one, and is given as an example to illustrate that it is the basic discipline of Educational Technology which constantly searches for efficient alternatives, which keeps on checking on system used all the time, by reference to grassroots that makes it possible for any learning system to be efficient, innovative and resilient. Traditionally academics tend to think that writing objectives is a sufficient guarantee to ensure that right content would be prescribed for a course. Unfortunately it is pretty common to have a mismatch of objectives and content. If this is so in an old and time-worn activity like developing of curriculum, the chances of mismatch in respect of sequencing, writing of texts, and other media materials which are new specially for distance students are greater. One hopes that the techniques of Educational Technology would get wider acceptance both for developing courses, preparing course materials and self instructional/programmed format in traditional learning systems and preparation of textbooks as well.

6

Use of Audio-Visual Materials for Teaching English through Distance Education-an Ignou Case Study

DR. P.N. PANDIT

In a paper read out at the Symposium for Communication Education, Research and Training on 27 March, 1989, Dr. P.C. Joshi mentioned the peculiar position of English being used by the media in India as a language of communication. English was being used despite the fact that people had not yet moved up from the stage of the dialect to vernacular and English was spoken by a bare 2 per cent of the population. The same formidable prospect confronts us when an open university which allows students to join without formal qualifications proposes to bring the knowledge of English through the medium of English to the doorsteps of an *amorphous student target group* which was diverse linguistic backgrounds. At the outset, we have to ask ourselves how we are going to *standardize the courses*. How are we to measure the Entrance Level Behaviour of our prospective learners ? What is their *existing English language competence and conceptual level* ? Do they have the adequate *aural and visual literacy* to make the best use of audiovisual language teaching materials ?

The explosion in modern *educational technology* and large *radio and TV coverage* in our country have opened up vast poten-

*This paper has presented in the Seminar on Teaching Eight through correspendence held in Delhi University in April 1989.

tials for disseminating education at a distance. At IGNOU, we are using technology to bring education to large sections of deprived people in the country. The Bachelor's Degree Programme was launched in September, 1988 and a number of audio and video programmes have been produced to supplement and re-inforce the printed English language courses in the Foundation and Elective-I courses. Most of the courses are designed from a practical application-oriented point of view. The audio and video programmes will be available for play at the many *study centres* in the country and will later be *broadcast on radio and TV* so that the general masses may benefit from them. Thus we aim at *democratizing education*, giving everyone an equal opportunity to learn from good quality materials. Our first Bachelor's Degree Programme comprises our *Dilot years* after which we should be able to gather enough feedback from our learners on our audio-video materials and then revise or remake them in the light of research.

In this paper I wish to present the following points :

1. This general advantages of audio video materials for English language teaching which we have exploited in our own programmes.
2. What stages of planning and production these materials go through.
3. The pedagogy of language teaching used in the audio-video programmes.
4. How the counsellers at study centres help the students to make optimum use of these materials.
5. Research and feedback on the materials,
6. Finally, I wish to play bits of different audio-video programmes we have produced and show what pedagogy has gone into their formating and show how similar formats could be used for different language areas.

Your valuable comments and suggestions on this paper will help us to broaden our thinking on this subject.

Advantages of audio-visual materials in language teaching

1. Wilber Schramm, one of the pioneers of educational technology in his book 'Big Media Small Media' says that

media use has opened up possibillties in education which were hitherto unknown and unimagined. The 'Electronic Teacher never tires or gets bored of responding to a learner's questions, does not overwhelm him with scholarship, but leaves him at the centre of the learning process. The knowledge imparted is thus *learner—oriented.*

2. The use of audio and video cassettes gives a learner *control over* his own *time management.* He is free to play a programme or a part of it any number of times whenever he feels like. The learner is free from spatial constraints. He can hear or view a programme wherever he likes.
3. One of the greatest advantages of language teaching through media is that *the best teachers in an area* can be heard and viewed by everyone in the country. This will go a long way towards equalisation of opportunities and standards in education.
4. The knowledge imparted through an audio or video cassette in *properly structured and programmed* taking a learner *step by step* from the easy and familiar to the difficult and unfamiliar aspects of a subject. It is purposefully directed and not loose-strung and rambling like a talk might be. Therefore, time is properly utilized and the point is made effectively.
5. '*First interest the student and then inform him*' is a sound principle of pedagogy. Thus a dramatization in sound and vision engages a student's multiple stimuli and senses. A video programme can take a learner to settings outside his classroom or house and stimulate his imagination. Sound effects can *recreate an atmosphere.* The use of folklore can help to gain a student's attention while making a point. 'Educate by stealth' is the principle here.
6. The *interpretative qualities* of a teacher's voice and the *non-verbal language* of expressions and gestures—all these make a language lesson a real-life experience with which *a student can identify himself.*
7. A number of technical '*gimmicks*' on video can *help to concretize abstract English language lessons.* A programme on words and sentence construction can be effectively presented by means of video-typed letters which can

automatically be shifted around or dissolved to show syntactical transformations. Words to be highlighted could be encircled or made to glow or appear and disappear on magnetic boards. Charts and models help the learner to visualise a gamut of ideas and paradigms in a proper perspective. A sequence of frame may be 'freezed' to let the teaching voice explain a point. The use of the 'split' screen can be used to demonstrate how two time sequences can take place simultaneously. Eg. In the sentence. 'He was sleeping when I arrived', the two actions of 'sleeping' and 'arriving' could be displayed in different sections of the screen simultaneously. In fact, the possibilities are infinite.

Planning and Production of Audio-visual Programmes at IGNOU

1. At IGNOU the planning and production of an audio-video programme in English passes through many stages. There is a brainstorming session between the academic who writes the lessons and the producer of the programme. They decide on the *choice of the medium*. What will be best for a particular teaching point—an audio or a video programme ? Certain subjects like phonetics *lend themselves* to audio and others like communicative skills in real-life situations would come through best on video. The producer decides on any or more of the following *formats*—a discussion between friends, a discussion between a teacher and students, a narration followed by an explanation, a dramatization or presentation of real-life sequences followed by an analysis of the language used, an interactive lesson in which a discussion is followed by an exercise for the student to do. In this last type of format, the learner will be instructed to stop an audio cassette in the middle of a programme and fill in a worksheet.
2. The academic decides the linguistic level at which the programme will be *pitched* and writes an *'academic brief'* which contains the contents for the programme. He may then write the *script* for the programme or get it written

by a professional.

3. The producer then checks the script to see how it would come out on audio or video. All along there is continual interaction and the script is subject to several *modifications*.
4. The producer selects the talents to voice and act in the programme. These may be the academics at IGNOU or professionals from outside. The programmes are then made in our studios at the Communication Division.
5. Finally the programmes are *previewed* by academics, producers and experts in the subject. They are edited in the light of the suggestions made and despatched to study centres. They are also available for sale at moderate prices in the market.

The following principles and techniques are generally used to make the programmes effective self-instructional materials :

1. The teacher who writes the 'academic brief' and the script has years of face-to-face teaching experience in the subject in the conventional system. He tries to *build himself into the programme.* From his experience, he can *anticipate the questions* that might arise in a learner's mind while listening to or viewing a programme. It might be some doubt about a term or word used, or a concept. Nothing is taken for granted about the learner. The teacher *incorporates the answers* to the learner's doubts into his script. In fact, he begins with easy and familiar points and leads the learner step by step to the more difficult points of a subject.
2. Since the programme will be heard and seen by a student group with a wide spectrum of competence, *both easy and challenging elements* of a subject are wisely intermeshed into a programmes so that neither the beginner is scared off nor the advanced student bored. The explanations are always in simple language. Where there are unusual or unfamiliar terms used, these are immediately explained.
3. Each programme has a number of *repetitions and redundancies* built into it. A certain point may be repeated in different ways by different speakers. This helps the slow

learner when he misses a point and has no teacher at hand to help him.

4. After a part of the programme, the main points are *recapitulated,* so that the student does not loss the main points of a discussion or a talk. The pedagogical principle to note here is 'Say what you are going to say, say it, and say what you have said.'
5. Care is taken *not to drown the student* in too much information in any one programme. The usual length of a programme is 20-30 minutes and comprises *one main teaching point.*
6. Care is taken to see that there are *no abrupt transitions* in the programme. Points must follow in logical sequence, otherwise the student's concentration might waver.
7. A discussion is built around *many examples* with which a learner would be familiar. The teaching point is drawn out by an analysis of the examples.
8. All along, the teaching voice on the audio and the presenter on a video, adopts *a warm, personal style* of talking, introducing humour at places to '*empathize*' and create rapport with the learner.

The Role of the Counsellor in the use of audio-visual materials at Study Centres

Does the teacher become redundant in the distance education system ? Far from it. Though the teaching materials produced are self-instructional and dispense the teacher from his role as a mere disseminator of knowledge, it leaves him free to 'counsel' the students at the study centre. He can attend to individual problems better. The counsellor can make the audio-video playing sessions more meaningful. He helps the student to make *optimum utilization* of the audio-visuals. Before playing a programme, *he primes or tunes the learners* by introducing the student to the subject he is going to hear or see. He asks the students a few questions leading them to the point from where they can launch off into the programme.

He can *follow* the programme up *with a discussion* to see that the learners have understood the salient points. Some programmes can be used *to stimulate a debate* or *lead to role-play.* This helps to ensure that the student follows the teaching imparted in a pro-

gramme and is not merely carried away by the story-line or the dramatic effects used.

Many imaginative *video plans* are possible for exploiting a video programme. For instance, a counsellor might play a video on a dramatized conversation taking place at a particular place. He can then replay the video 'audio-off' and ask the students to recall what is being said. Or he can play the video and cover the screen and ask them to guess the speakers and the settings from the voice and dialogues.

The programmes are generally accompanied with '*media notes*' that do the work of the counsellor outlined above for the students who do not attend the sessions at the study centres. But even then, the occasional face-to-face or contact session is a great help because certain individual problems can only be attend to by a teacher who is physically present. Eg. A student tries to imitate the pronunciation of a word he hears on an audiocassette. Because of language I interference or the influence of the mother tongue he hears a word in the way he is used to hearing a similar sound in his own language. In a contact programme the teacher can prepare a student to 'hear' correctly by explaining the articulation of certain sounds. Then the student can use the cassette on his own and re-inforce the knowledge of the sounds.

Research and Feedback of the Materials

One great disadvantage in the use of audio-video materials is that we have *no instant feedback*. Besides, it is impossible to get a fairly representative student group on whom to try out a programme before approving it. The average student we have taken is that of the 10+2 level with a basic linguistic and conceptual competence. There are bound to be misjudgements in these considerations because of the great diversity of the student target group. But a research cell has now been opened up in the Communication Division of IGNOU which will begin to gather feedback on the students' reactions to our audio-visual materials. The programmes will then be edited, revised or remade in the light of the collated feedback.

English Language Audio-Video Programmes produced at IGNOU

Foundation Course in English 1—10 audios. The audios are

integrative* with the printed course material. They are meant to give practice in listening comprehension, aid the understanding of various topics given in the printed text through discussion, give practice in pronunciation, stress and intonation and to present models of various speeches and dialogues.

1 Video

'The Nightingale and the Rose'

— a dramatization in computergraphics of the story given for study in the printed material. The video is a supplementary device to aid the students' understanding of the story with visuals and dramatic dialogue.

Foundation Course in English—2 (optional)
Audios—The Writing of an Argument
The Writing of Paragraphs
Note taking from Lectures.

Videos—to supplement the printed lessons.
'Descriptive Composition'—
Dramatization to present the use of descriptive language.
'Reporting Events and Interviews'

Elective Course in English—1 (optional)
Audios

- Metaphors as Extensions of meaning.
- Sound Patterns in English

Common Errors
Rhetorical Devices.

Videos under preparation :

1. Structural Words in English
2. Literary Devices

*The Student is instructed in the printed book to play an audiocasette and then read the lesson.

PART THREE

PREPARATION OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

7

Lesson Writing in Distance Teaching System

PROF. BAKHSHISH SINGH

I

Importance and approach

Lessons constitute the mainstay of teaching through correspondence. Even in advanced countries of the world where Open Universities and highly developed mass communication media have brought about revolutionary changes in educational methods, printed lesson is still the most important means of imparting instruction to thousands of learners at a distance. Special care, therefore, needs to be taken to ensure academic standard while preparing the lesson. This is all the more important in our country where we are not yet in a position to supplement, or reinforce instruction through such mass media. In fact, the success of a correspondence course in our country will, to a large extent, depend upon the quality of lessons produced for that course.

In the conventional face-to-face teaching in the class room, the teacher may be able to bluff his way through even if he has not prepared his lecture well, but in a correspondence lesson he cannot afford to do that, particularly when the lesson is printed under his name. Thus, if a lesson is not properly written, it will

*This paper was presented in the worship for Production of Instructional Mankind held in Patiala in Nov, 1982.

adversely affect the reputation of the course as well as the course writer. We must, therefore, be very careful in choosing the coursewriters. They must be good teachers and sound scholars with a flair for writing and a sense of dedication and honesty.

According to the existing practice in our Institutes of Correspondence Courses, we select a panel of lesson writers and the lessons are written by individuals and not by a team of lesson writers. No doubt some individuals are capable of writing good lessons. but there is no denying the fact that collective wisdom can produce better results. This idea has been tried by the British Open University and their teams of lesson writers have done a marvellous job by producing excellent lesson units or course material. The excellence of their work has been established by the fact that even conventional Universities buy the course material of Open University for use by their students.

The course writing team of the British Open University comprises not only the subject experts, but also the educational technologist and the media experts. The team discusses the syllabus and prepares a break-down of topics to be covered in different lessons. Then it looks into the course content of a particular lesson, discusses the objectives, scope of coverage of subject matter, illustrations and format etc. in the light of the need and capabilities of the learners. The team then leaves it to an individual to develop the lesson in its proper form. The individual lesson writer comes back to the team with his draft when it is ready and the draft is thoroughly discussed and frankly criticised. The lessen may be accepted by the team after making some modifications or additions etc, or it may be required to be re-written and again shown to the team. This obviously is an integrated and fool proof approach to the writing of lessons and they are bound to be of good quality.

If we really want our lessons to be of good standard then we must adopt this idea of course-writing teams instead of leaving it to an individual teacher to write lessons.

To furter ensure that our lessons are suitable and meet the educational needs of the students we should try out the lessons on a group of our students as a pilot project and them improve them in the light of students response and reaction to them.

There is one very serious anomaly that I would like to point out in our present set-up of lesson-writing. Most of the lessons

for correspondence courses are written by college or University teachers who have no idea of the correspondence method of teaching and no contact with the correspondence courses student. At a Seminar organised by the Centre for Educational Technology of the NCERT held at Mysore this year, the British Open University expert was surprised when he discovered this. He felt that unless a teacher handles the students for whom he is to write lessons he cannot possibly know the iearning needs of those students. Moreover, unless the course-writer is familiar with the special requirements and methodology of teaching a distant learner through correspondence lessons. There ought to be a close report between the lesson writer and the students so that lesson-writer may receive the necessary feed back from his learners to see how for his lesson has been helpful to the students, and revise or recast it accordingly.

Another point that I would like to stress to ensure that we produce quality lessons, is the need for periodic review and updating of lessons. This is absolutely necessary to ensure that we do not convey wrong facts and figures or factual information to our students. This is particularly necessary for example in subjects like Political Science, Economic and Public Administration where facts and figures are apt to change from time to time. Here again I feel it would be safer to have teams of reviewers than individuals. The review of lessons should also be based on the feed-back that we receive from our students through their response sheets or queries from the tutors. The tutors who evaluate the students' response sheets could provide very useful evaluation of the lessons as they can judge from the students' answers how many students been able to comprehend and assimilate a lesson to what extent and a so on what points has the lesson failed to explain and clarify things to the students. The course team should undertake a systematic evaluation of their lessons and review and recast them in the light of difficulties that the students may have experienced in the comprehension and assimilation of their lessons.

II

After having discussed the importance of and approach to the preparation of course material, let us now try to grapple with the problem of writing a good lesson of course material. But before

that we should be clear in our mind about the pedagogical functions of a lesson. These would generally be :

— to guide the students in their studies
— to impart facts and knowledge
— to teach skills
— to aid students in the assimilation of knowledge and skills
— to test students' understanding and attainment

Once we are clear in our mind about these pedagogical functions of a lesson we should try to know something about learners. I referred to this point in my first lecture when I said that the lesson writer should know the social and educational background of his students for whom the lessons are to be written and also bear in mind the problems and difficulties that the corresspondence students are likely to face in pursuing their studies. This is very necessary because if the lessons are written without proper understanding of the students' background and problem it will be difficult to help them overcome the feeling of isolation that the correspondence students generally have.

The lesson writer should also remember that writing a lesson is different from writing a book or a lecture. Books are a one-way form of communication whereas the lessons are supposed to establish a two-way communication. The lesson writer must project himself into the lesson. It should look as if he is talking through the lesson The lesson must be so designed and written that it may stimulate study and sustain the students' interest in the subject being taught through the lesson. We have to be particularly careful in writing the first one or two lessons, which should give the students a good start and confidence. The correspondence students would probably need more help and guidance for initiating them into the study of their subjects than the class room students. The first few lessons should encourage the students so that they may evince and sustain interest in the subject of their study. The lessons should therefore be structured on the cyclic principle so that the students may have a sense of familiarity as they grasp new interpretations of the concepts being taught to them. Thus the lessons should be carefully graded in difficulty.

Each lesson should be so designed that it may give the students the feeling that they are getting somewhere. The lesson

should be programmed in a proper logical learning sequence and be planned in such a way that it may give the students a sense of accomplishment. Each lesson should mean a step forward for the students and at the some time there should be a coherence and unity in the whole set of lessons comprising a course.

The structure and content of a lesson would also depend on whether the course for which lessons are to be written is based on text books or not. The language courses generally have prescribed text books and the lessons in such courses will naturally need to offer elaboration, explanation or clarification of ideas or points contained in the texts or supplement the information contained in the text. The lesson writer may also have to put in a glossary of difficult words and phrases and explain their meanings and usage. Some comprehension exercises may also need to be included. We may have to follow this pattern even for some Humanities and science courses where some basic books have been prescribed or suggested.

However, in subjects in which no text books are prescribed the lessons will have to be more or less self-contained. In the Indian context even when the syllabus provides a list of suggested reading, as for example at the postgraduate level, we have to provide self-contained lessons to our students because quite a number of them may not have easy access to a library and the books may be too costly for them to buy. To say that lessons at the postgraduate level should be in the nature of guidelines betrays an unrealistic approach which ignores the genuine difficulties of students. In fact we have to sometimes supplement our lessons with a package of reference material containing extracts from journals and books to satisfy the educational needs of our students. Of course the lessons must leave room for some independent reading and thinking on the part of students.

The designing of single lesson also calls for the application of systems approach. The lesson writer must, therefore, first of all, decide what are to be the objectives of the lesson that he is going to write, and ensure that the subject matter that he puts in leads to the defined objectives. The objectives which should be specific and explicit should be spelt out in precise terms. That should help the teacher to

(i) select and arrange learning experiences; and

(ii) evaluate the students' progress and achievements

Once these points are clear in his mind the lesson writer should do some thinking on the course content and the style. So far as the course content is concerned the syllabus will be the main guiding factor. The first step should be to understand the scope of the syllabus and split it up into suitable sections or parts. Each section should be covered by a lesson or alternatively a few sections which can be grouped together to be covered by a unit of lessons comprising 4-6 lessons. The lesson must identify subject fundamentals fully explain the basic principles of the subject under discussion, highlight the important points. It must provide the essential knowledge about the topic that it deals with and suggest some independent reading and thinking to widen the students' mental horizon and understanding of the subject being taught to him. The course content should be presented in a graded and interesting manner that may arouse and sustain the student's interest in the subject of his study. The lesson writer must never presume that the entire knowledge on a subject can be squeezed into a single lesson or unit of lessons. The student should be encouraged to read a little bit on his own too and to apply his brains to shift material from other sources.

If the Radio and TV support is available, the lesson writer will have to take that also into account and plan the course content of his lesson accordingly. If the Radio or TV programme is of supplementary nature, he could probably skip some details in his lesson and if the Radio or TV programme is to exclusively teach some selected aspects, those aspects could be disposed of in the lesson just in passing.

The course content in the lesson should be divided into manageable sections or parts under suitable headings and sub-headings to avoid continuous and full reading. It would also be helpful if the continuity of 'lesson lecture' is now and then broken by throwing in some self check comprehension exercises. That would provide a welcome pause to the student to recapitulate what he has read upto that point and judge his comprehension of that portion. It would also give him the feeling of a dialogue with the lesson-writer and make him alert and probably self-reliant also.

The lesson writer must ensure that the facts and figures that he has provided in a lesson are correct and that his course content

is not out-dated or obsolete. He must suggest suitable reading for the students and put in some questions that would check whether the student has done the suggested reading or not. At the end of the lesson the lesson writer should include some specific short answer as well as essay type questions for the students to answer and submit for evaluation. These questions should judge the students' comprehension and expression and help them understand and remember facts, give them practice in writing and applying the knowledge required by them. These Responses would help the teacher to watch the students' progress and also enable the student to know where he stands. This would start a very useful two-way communication between the teacher and the taught and go a long way in instilling confidence and in cultivating regular study habit in the student. A well written lesson and the submission and evaluation of a response sheet can be two very distinct advantages that would give the correspondence student an edge over the students in colleges and University Teaching Departments.

Although it is not easy to lay down any hard and fast rule regarding the length of a lesson, it will to some extent depend upon the nature of the subject matter and the time the students are expected to spend on it. The length of the lesson will also depend upon the relationship between the text-book and the lesson. However, we must guard against the advice of some academicians that the lessons should be sketchy or in the form of guidelines. This, as I said earlier, would be possible only when we are sure that a good library is within the easy reach of all the students and the text-books and the suggested reading materials are readily available to them. At the same time we should not make our lessons too lengthy and detailed because too voluminous lessons may frighten the students and discourage them from continuing their studies. So we have to strike a balance somewhere between these two extremes in order to make our lessons interesting, acceptable and useful to the students.

Another important point that a lesson writer must bear in mind is coherence. Although a good deal of knowledge, information and facts and figures may have to be put into the lesson, it must be done in a logical and coherent manner. The lesson must not look like a jumble of ideas, arguments, facts and figures etc. put together in a haphazard manner. It must be logically,

consistently and systematically developed and there must be an over-all coherence in the presentation of the subject matter.

Language and style constitute another important aspect of a good lesson, The lesson writer must be sure of the proficiency of students in the language in which the lesson is to be written. In our country, with the general deterioration in the standard of English in colleges and Universities, who have to be specially careful in writing our lessons in English medium. Even in the regional languages we must exercise care in the use of difficult words and terminology. It would be safer to use simple and straight-forward language appropriate to the subject matter and to avoid long drawn-out and complex sentences.

Regarding style, although one can safely say that the impersonal style of text-books is not suitable for the writing of a lesson, it is rather difficult to lay down a standard style. In fact it is generally good to leave it to the lesson-writer because the more individual the lesson is the better would it be. However, too complicated a style should be avoided. The lesson should generally be written in the first person, addressing the students as 'you', so as to give the feeling to the students that the teacher is talking to them through the lesson. The style and tone should neither be too formal nor too informal or chatty but it should sound personal and friendly.

Another point that needs to be remembered while writing a lesson is clarity of thought as well as expression. This is very important because unlike the class room student, the correspondence student cannot seek immediate help to clarify a point that may appear confusing to him while reading the lesson. Similarly the writing needs to be varied because an overall sameness will make it dull and monotonous. The variation will make it interesting and help in sustaining the students interest. However, the variation must stem from the nature of material being presented in the lesson. In some cases it may be possible to make the opening sentence or paragraph somewhat chatty and colloquial and then change over to more subtle, precise and formal language and style.

Thus we see that lesson writing is quite a difficult and taxing assignment and needs good deal of expertise in the subject as well as methodology. If we really want correspondence education to be an effective method of imparting education, we must pay

special attention to lesson-writing which is the mainstay of this system. One of the ways of achieving excellence in this is to organise intensive workshops and short training courses for lesson-writers in different subjects with the help of experts in distance teaching, educational technologists and good scholars of the subjects concerned. And here I would like that we should have course-writing teams rather than individual course writers for the writing of lessons for correspondence courses students.

8

Study Material and their Preparation in the British open University

DAVID SEWART

INTRODUCTION

What is an OU course ?

A *course* is defined primarily with reference to the amount of work it presents to the student. Over an active acadmic year of 32 weeks the total full-credit workload (including time spent watching broadcasts, writing assignments, reading set books, performing home experiments, using ancillary material as well as working through the correspondence text and supplementary material) will be between 320 and 360 hours. For a half-credit course over the same period the total will be 160 to 180 hours.

The study of two half-credit courses places additional demands on students in the organisation of their time and particular attention should be paid to not including more content and not developing more complex concepts in one course than can be dealt with by students doing other courses simultaneously.

Work should be spread as evenly as possible across the weeks of the course. The academic year runs from February until October with breaks for Easter, Spring, Wimbledon/Open Golf, and, once every four years, the Olympic Games. The exams are

*A background paper for Regional Seminars in Correspondence Education held in Nov.-December 1978.

held at the end of October and early November. Detailed scheduling is usually expressed in BBC week numbers (these are simply the numbers of the weeks of the year, starting with the week following the first Saturday in January as week 1).

The other *essential* characteristics of a course are as follows :

Level

Each course is at one of four levels. The definition of second level is as follows :

> courses at second level must be such that students who have obtained four full credits (or the equivalent) at that level (in addition to two foundation courses) are at a standard equivalent to that reached by students who have obtained an ordinary degree at a conventional university. Second level courses should be designed for the student in search of breadth. They should be directed at a wide non-specialist audience, though this does not necessarily imply that the subject matter of such courses should be broadly based. Though they may become part of a specialise course, the courses should be suitable for those whose main interests may lie elsewhere.

The definition of third level is :

> courses at the third level may be specialised or multi-disciplinary in nature and may be distinguished by either or both of the following criteria :
>
> (a) they may depend upon academic skills developed in earlier courses (e.g. mathematics, scientific concept logic, use of specialised vocabularies, etc.)
> (b) they may be written for those who wish to study a particular topic or topics in depth.

The provisional definition of fourth level is :

> one with assumed entry behaviour specified as the passing of a third level course.

A course at a certain level does not have to depend upon

particular knowledge or skills acquired at earlier levels. The primary functions of the 'level' are to ensure adequate academic standards and to assist students choosing courses suitable for their various stages of development. It should also allow students to move across faculty boundaries without too great problems of adjustment.

Size of course

The University does not allow students to take courses smaller than a half-credit. All courses so far presented have therefore been half or full-credit courses. In some instances a half-credit has been composed of smaller components put together by the student as he wished, but it is unlikely that future proposals of this nature would be accepted.

Assessment

There are two mandatory parts to a course :

(1) Tutor-marked assignments, at the minimal rate of 8 for a full credit and 4 for a half (but see notes on projects in 16 below).
(2) A written examination (in one case, this is computer marked) (See sections M, N and O)

Timing

All courses run throughout the academic year, not sequentially within it. Therefore a half-credit will take as long to complete as a full credit, only at half the pressure of work.

Broadcasts

While these are not an essential component of an OU course, so far only one course has been approved without a broadcast element, and one course will use radio only. (See section F)

Distance

The particular methods of teaching chosen must be in accordance with the University's objective of teaching students at a distance, primarily in their own homes.

There are also various *optional* characteristics of a course (it should be noted, however, that these may not necessarily be

optional for students). The University generally wishes to encourage experiment in course design, so this must not be regarded as anything approaching a comprehensive list, because new ideas are continually being formulated.

Computer marked assignments

The number used is variable, but to make programming worthwhile there should be a minimum of 4 such assignments where the decision is taken to use them at all. (See section L)

Projects

These are opportunities for students to exercise considerably more initiative than they would normally within the conventional structure of an OU course and are probably most applicable at third or fourth level. For assessment purposes a project may be rated as the equivalent of a certain number of assignments. (See sections K and L).

Summer Schools

The summer school is one week in each case, and for those courses with summer schools attendance is *compulsory*. In other words, a credit cannot be awarded unless the summer school has been attended (but in exceptional cases a student may be excused from attendance). Performance in a summer school assessment is sometimes taken into account in the overall final assessment, and the University's requirement is to attend, not to perform satisfactorily. There are three types of summer school at the moment : course based, discipline based and joint. (See section H)

Home experiment kit

There are considerable controls on the use of kits, and each bid for one must be closely justified. While kits are not formally defined, a useful waiting definition is 'items sent to students on a returnable basis' against a financial deposit. Non-returnable items are described as 'ancillary materials'. (See section G)

Computing

The Student Computing Service is a facility whereby students have access to computer terminals at study centres. (See section J)

Reader

A collection of articles and extracts assembled to provide easily accessible background material to a course, which is published under the Open University Press imprint and purchased by the students as a set book.

Set books (See section E)

The responsibilities of the course team chairman

The University makes two primary requirements of the course team chairman. They are :

(i) To ensure that the course is produced on time and in accordance with the specification approved by the University, and

(ii) To ensure that, as far as possible, material is kept up to date during the years in which it is presented to students and to ensure the maintenance of the teaching function throughout the course's life.

The list of the chairman's specific responsibilities to the Dean reads as follows :

(i) Planning and development of the academic aspects of the course within policies approved by the faculty board and the Senate;

(ii) Proposals to the course team for appointment of external and internal examiners to the course examination and assessment board;

(iii) Maintenance of academic standards in the course and for ensuring that procedures approved by the Senate for maintaining these standards are adhered to;

(iv) With the approval of the Dean allocation or re-allocation of work to members of the course team or staff seconded by the Dean to work for the course team, subject to the overriding terms and conditions of appointment of such staff;

(v) Recommendations to the Dean for the re-assignment of a member of a course team to another course team;

(vi) Allocation to specific spending programmes and administration of the budget allocated to the course by the Dean

within guideliness approved by the Council of the University and after consultation with the course team, and subject to the authorisation of the Dean with regard to specific items of expenditure;

(vii) Ensuring that academic, specified operational and tutorial constraints which affect direct student costs in respect home kits, student computing service, printing, postage and course tuition etc., are adhered to;

(viii) Agreement of course production schedules for broadcasts and study materials with course team members, BBC senior producer and Project Controller, for operating procedures for reporting on these schedules, for ensuring that schedules are adhered to by the course team members and for ensuring that the course is produced in accordance with the schedule established by the University.

(ix) Ensuring that :

(a) the course adheres to agreed University house styles and definitions for the presentation of study material;

(b) the course team take all reasonable care in terms of the University's legal liability, in relation to libel, slander, defamation, copyright and other matters,

(c) information is provided at agreed times and within agreed University policies on such matters as designation of set books and recommended reading, the recruitment and briefing of course tutors and summer school tutors where relevant; for the dates of submission of computer marked and tutor marked assignments, for the specification of home kit components and delivery dates, for the specification of computer marked assignment marking schemes and tutors' notes and marking schemes;

(x) Recommendations to the Dean for appointment, rates of payment and terms of appointment of consultants and external assessors;

(xi) Maintenance and remaking of components of the course either directly or by the designation with the approval of the Dean of a maintenance conrse team member.

(xii) Proposals to the Dean for developmental testing of course material on advice of IET.
(xiii) Arrangements for the collection of feedback data and its subsequent use.

The course team chairman is also responsible for liaison with the Marketing Division (See section D)

Academic plan

Proposals for new or remade courses need to be viewed in the context of continuing discussion in the University about course provision policy. There are three main aspects to the policy agreed by the Senate in July 1974 :

(a) a statement of the objectives of the University in the under-graduate area,
(b) a provisional agreement that the University should plan to achieve a total of 87 credits in the undergradute area by 1984, and a provisional agreement as to the way in which the 87 credits should be divided between the faculties,
(c) an emphasis on more broadly based courses, termed 'U' (for University) courses.

The statement of objectives in terms of undergraduate courses is :

(i) To provide students with a range of multi-disciplinary foundation courses.
(ii) To provide students with courses of a range which allows those who do not want to centre their studies on one particular area to plan a coherent basic degree.
(iii) To provide students with an opportunity to 'major' in a number of 'areas of study'.

The Senate recognised that the concepts of 'areas of study' and 'majoring' in the OU context needed to be further defined and discussions are currently taking place within and between faculties on these matters. The agreement that the University should aim to achieve a total of 87 credits by 1984 and

the further agreement on the faculty distribution of these credits were provisional in the sense that these two issues were only agreed 'pending further examination of 'majoring' areas'. The provisional faculty distribution is as follows :

> Arts—16, Social Sciences—16, Educational Studies—9, Mathematics—10, Science—15, Technology—15, (plus the two 'U' courses planned by two faculties in association, i.e. Social Science and Educational Studies)

Roughly one quarter of the total number of course credits will be of the broadly based 'U' type (22 out of 87). The 'U' course provision is essential to the achievement of the academic plan, because the latter is meant to include opportunities both for concentrating on particular subjects and for taking more varied degree programmes. Each faculty will be required to produce, within its total provision as set out in paragraph 27 above, a specific number of credits satisfying the main criteria of the 'U' course : Arts—4, Social Sciences—4, Educational Studies—2, Mathematics—1, Science—2, Technology—3. In addition to the 18 faculty—originated 'U' credits there will be a much smaller group of 4 credits initiated by the Courses Committee itself on the basis of proposals put to it.

The definition of criteria for 'U' courses is, in the first instance, a matter for the 'U' Area Subcommittee. The joint Working Group on Course Provision whose proposals formed the basis for the Senate decisions, set out its concept in the section concerned with 'U' courses, as follows :

> " 'U' courses are courses of a non-intrinsic type which offer usually at second level, an exploration of a subject of fairly wide general interest and require no more pre-requisites or previously-acquired expertise than a serious interest in and commitment to a more thorough and regorous study of that particular subject, and a willingness to master as necessary any appropriate skills required."

Readers who would like further information about the academic plan may wish to refer to the draft final report of the Joint Working Group on Course Provision (OU/74/6) and to the Senate minutes for July 1974.

Distance teaching : the context

The Open University teaching system has been developed specifically for the home student. It follows that much of the material in correspondence texts has to be directed to helping the student to learn for himself and to engage in self-teaching and that the extensive tutorial and counselling support services and the summer school provision must be viewed in this context.

The University employs about 5800 tutors and counsellors and provides facilities for the part time staff to meet groups of students in its study centres. Revised tutorial and counselling arrangements were introduced in January 1976. From that date each foundation course student will normally have a local tutor/counsellor who will assess and comment on his written assignments and offer general study advice and support (for example, in such matters as techniques of study and course choice). When the student progresses beyond foundation level, he will usually still be able to contact his tutor/counsellor for general study advice, but tution for higher level courses will remain the responsibility of specialist course tutors.

Tutor/counsellors and course tutors will normally be expected to conduct a limited number of tutorial and discussion sessions for their students at their local study centres. At post-foundation levels in particular however, the opportunities for face to face tutorials will continue to be very restricted—totalling no more than seven to eight hours over the year for many half-credit courses. Often the small number of students following a post-foundation course means that it will be difficult, if not possible, for all or most of the students to attend the tutorials. The purpose of the tutorial session is essentially remedial, i.e. they present an opportunity for the tutor/counsellor or course tutor to remedy academic weaknesses or deficiencies of understanding in his students.

There are over 260 study centres throughout the U.K. In general they are wherever there are enough students within reasonable distance to justify them. Most are located in colleges and are usually open in the evenings from Monday to Friday (and in some cases on Saturday mornings also). They present students with opportunities to meet each other, as well as with opportunities to meet members of the part-time staff, and to learn from each other in discussion groups. In addition they offer students a range of

facilities to supplement those available at home, for example :

(i) a VHF radio and BBC 2 television for students who prefer to listen or watch as members of a group or who cannot receive the programmes at home,
(ii) a complete set of radio tapes of foundation course broadcasts, some second level broadcasts and a relay machine,
(iii) a film projector to show cassetted film copies of television programmes from foundation courses and some second level courses,
(iv) a computer terminal, installed at approximately 150 centres.

All foundation courses and several post-foundation courses include a one-week residential summer school held in various universities between mid-July and early September. Summer schools provide the opportunity for a short but extensive period of full time study in a traditional university setting but, like the study centre-based tutorial, they are no more than supportive elements in the home-based learning system. For several reasons the University cannot provide summer schools for all the courses which might wish to have them : the pattern of summer school provision up to and including 1979 has already been determined while provision for 1980 and beyond is currently the subject of a major review.

For those courses which have them, attendance at summer schools is compulsory (in the sense that a credit cannot normally be awarded to non-attenders). Course teams which have summer schools can therefore plan in the knowledge that the Summer School forms a compulsory part of a course : only a relatively few students, who are excused attendance, will miss out. Attendance at study centres for tutorials and study sessions is optional, however, and in practice only about 50% of students regularly attend. Given the principle of voluntary attendance, study centre tutorials are necessarily supplementary rather than integral to the course. Only for one course has it been agreed so far that attendance at a 'tutorial' (actually in this instance a field work exercise), is essential and even in this case it is not compulsory in the sense that the award of a credit depends on attendance.

Compulsion is also unusual in written assignments and projects. Except in rare instances, each of which needs the approval of the Academic Board and Student Affairs and Awards Board, no TMA is compulsory for the student. He is required, for credit purposes, to submit a minimum number of TMAs (normally about three-quarters of the total within the course) but the course team cannot write the course in the expectation that the student *must* submit a particular assignment unless a special case has been agreed. Policy on compulsory assignments is also currently under review.

Students may establish their own informal 'self help' discussion groups. In 1978, there were several hundred of these groups; some lasted throughout the year, some for shorter periods of time-in between tutorials or day schools for example. These groups may meet in study centres, pubs, students' homes or elsewhere.

The possible application of two types of new technical facilities is currently being explored, as follows :

(i) Video-cassette-recorders (VCR)
An experiment has been conducted in one region into the use of video-cassette-recorders by students at six study centres. The VCR Steering Group's proposal that the University should reaffirm its original policy of providing TV and radio replay facilities in study centres is currently under discussion.

(ii) Telephone conference link
The General Purposes Fund Committee has allocated £ 2,000 for 'study of the use of telephone conference link' and there is now a working group to 'consider, coordinate and develop experimentation' in this area. The University installed direct telephone links to regional offices in 1977, which could demonstrate some of the strengths and weaknesses of the system as it might be applied to students in study centres.

Student numbers and course quotas

The University controls the size of its student population primarily by regulating the number of admissions. Each spring the Planning Board determines the number of new students who can be admitted for the following academic year. In doing so it is

largely governed by the target figure for the total student population, agreed previously (as a basis for funding by the DES) and by projections of student numbers. For 1975 and 1976 the total numbers of students have been somewhat modified because for each of these two years the University has pursuaded the DES to fund it for an additional 6000 new students which will enable it to exceed the previous target figure of a total population of 42,000 : but the concept of a target figure remains significant in University planning.

For planning purposes maximum course quotas are necessary for each course. They are particularly relevant to the work of the Course Resources Committee which has the task of determining the level of the resources to be allocated to each course team. The University needs realistic course quotas. For example, a course team may bid to the Course Resources Committee for a home experiment kit. The cost of the kit will be amortized over the life of the course. The kits will be ordered in advance in a quantity sufficient to last for the duration of the course, allowing for re-use and for some wastage each year. It is clearly necessary to establish in advance the number of students who can take the course each year in order to plan for the provision and budgeting of the equipment. Other examples can be quoted for course resources (e.g. tutorial resources) which do not involve the provision of materials.

Estimates for all courses are prepared by the Academic Planning Office in consultation with deans and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Planning), and they are approved by the Course Resources Committee about two years before presentation. The estimates provide the basis on which the purchasing section of the Bursary orders equipment from outside suppliers. Maximum quotas are established for courses having direct student costs above an approved University norm, or where there are durable home kit or ancillary items whose costs are amortized over a number of years. In such a case the quota is based on the estimated annual population for the course averaged over the expected life of the course.

Student course planning

Advice to students on course choice has a special significance in the context of a home based learning system. Course team chairman need to be aware of the factors governing student choice

and of the ways in which course teams and the University generally can influence course choice.

The University has always sought to keep the restrictions on course choice to a minimum. The regulations do however prescribe certain restrictions : the most important of these are summarized in the section on 'Choice of courses' in the *Courses Handbook*.

The *Courses Handbook* draws students' attention to *excluded combinations* and *prerequisities*. Both of these are particularly relevant to course team planning. The regulations governing excluded combinations are binding on the student; recommended prerequisities on the other hand are advisory and not mendatory.

Certain courses have substantial overlap of content, and are therefore designated an excluded combination, which means that a student will not be able to count both for credit purposes. The identification of significant overlap is, in the first instance, a matter for the course team and faculty board (and they should also take into account courses produced outside the faculty). In approving a course proposal, the Courses Committee will consider the extent of any possible overlap and it may seek assurances from the appropriate course teams. When a course is remade, the old and the new course will usually form an excluded combination because in most cases the academic content of the course will be similar.

The 'recommended prerequisite' is a device used to encourage students to structure their studies in such a way that they achieve an adequate grounding in the fundamentals of a subject before they proceed to an advanced course. It is most commonly used in Mathematics and Science. It is open to a prospective course team, in putting forward a proposal for a course, to suggest another lower level course (or courses) for designation as a recommended prerequisite. If this is agreed, students will be *advised* that they should obtain a credit in the lower level course first. The University does not make this advice binding on the student because he may already have acquired the necessary background knowledge through previous study elsewhere. It does however strongly encourage a student who is tempted to ignore a recommended prerequisite to consult his counsellor before making his final decision.

Counsellors have an important role to play in advising students on course choice : the recommended prerequisite is merely

an example of this. Students often have clear ideas of their own about the pattern of study they wish to pursue, but this is not always so. Particularly at conditional registration (when students are asked to make their choice of courses for the following year) the advice given can be of considerable help in resolving doubts which a student may have. The counsellor, like the student, has to rely initially on the descriptions of courses given in the *Courses Handbook*, the wording of these descriptions therefore has a significance which may not always be realised by the course team. The University is currently exploring providing written advice on degree programmes (as opposed merely to advice on individual courses) in the context of the discussions on faculty profiles and areas of study.

THE COURSE DEVELOPMENT TEAM

The concept of the course team

By working together as a team a group of academics, BBC producers, educational technologists, editors, designers, and others (see paras 9-17) develop an integrated multi-media course. Producing course materials is primarily a corporate, not an individual activity. In some faculties, the corporate nature of course production is recognised by crediting OU texts to course teams rather than to individuals.

The formal position of the Course team

The terms of reference and membership of the course team are as follows :

Terms of reference

To advise, produce, assist in the evaluation of, and provide for the maintenance of a course.

Membership

(i) A chairman, appointed by the Courses Committee on the nomination of the appropriate Faculty Board(s).

(ii) Such others as the Courses Committee shall appoint on the nomination of the appropriate Faculty Board(s) within the following categories :

(a) the central and regional academic staff
(b) the Institute of Educational Technology
(c) the BBC

Provided always that each is represented. (It is recognised, however, that this may not always be possible for the IET).

(iii) The Course Assistant(s) associated with that course, appointed by the Courses Committee on the nomination of the appropriate Faculty Board(s).
(iv) Such other staff as the Courses Committee shall appoint on the nomination of the appropriate Faculty Board(s).
(v) A representative of the regional academic staff from the course team panel of the Regional Tutorial Services Board appointed by the Courses Committee.
(vi) The Editor associated with the course.

The formal requirements for the way the course team functions are :

(i) The course team shall meet as and when required and shall work within the University's course production schedules, liaising when appropriate with the Operations Area, and Project Control, and providing information for University Committees through the Dean and/or Faculty Board when requested to do so. It shall report on the academic development of the course to the appropriate Dean and Faculty Board.
(ii) Its Chairman shall exercise the responsibilities delegated to him by the University. (see section A)
(iii) The course team shall recommend to the Faculty Board and thence to the Courses Committee a maintenance course team or a schedule of such teams, to maintain the course for its duration.

The Course team in practice

The effective membership, and the way a course team works, varies both between faculties and course levels. What follows is therefore a general picture on which a faculty's administrative

assistant will be able to elaborate.

The course team in practice often includes people such as a designer, liaison librarian and technician, who are not normally formal members of the team. Broadly speaking, the functions of course team members can be divided into :

(i) origination of material
(ii) administration, technical production of material
(iii) advice.

These functions are closely interrelated and one individual may well perform more than one of these functions, as may be seen from the following general job descriptions.

The course team chairman

The responsibilities of the course team chairman are set out in section A.

The chairman of an inter-faculty course team is responsible to the Dean of the faculty administratively responsible for the course. Individual members of the course teams are initially responsible to the inter-faculty course team chairman and ultimately to the Dean of the faculty in which they are appointed.

Central academic staff appointed by the Courses Committee

These can either be authors (writing correspondence texts, supplementary material, acting as the academic responsible for broadcasts, devising home experiment kits, editing the course reader, etc.) or readers/internal consultants (critically reading material for the team, primarily commenting on the subject-matter), Regional academic staff can of course play this role too.

External consultants

If a course team feels that it needs academic assistance within a particular area of the subject matter to be dealt with by a course, it may wish to appoint an external consultant. Such appointments must be made through the University Secretary, with the approval of the Dean.

The representative of the regional academic staff

Course teams should have a member of the regional academic

staff as a member of the course team, who also advises on tutorial matters. Nominations are made by the Director, RTS, from the course team pannel of the RTS Board, sent to faculties and jointly submitted to the Courses Committee by the Director, RTS and the Dean of the faculty.

The educational technologist (appointed by Director of IET)

All faculties have a member of the Institute Educational Technology attached to them for the purpose of advising their course teams on the production of the course as learning meterial; in particular, on assessment (both self-assessment and formal assignments, see sections D and L) and, after the course is presented, on feedback, (see section O) in order that the course is as educationally effective as possible. He may also advise on the development testing of the course (see section D).

Summary of his work

(i) Structuring and sequencing a course through, for example, formulating objectives, identifying pre-requisites, plotting interconnections between units, balancing demands of units, and planning sequences of assignments.

(ii) Selecting media and strategies for courses through, for example, advising on roles for TV and radio, considering the need for home kits, summer schools, day schools, gramaphone records, etc., suggesting alternative teaching strategies and evaluating available learning materials.

(iii) Developing individual blocks and units through formulating objectives, identifying prerequisites, ploting topic outlines, relating units to each other, advising on the use of media, suggesting student activities, commenting on weaknesses and strengths of draft units, developing assignment questions (both TMAs and CMAs) as models for authors, conducting or supervising developmental testing of units, and suggesting improvements to units.

(iv) Evaluating units and courses through, for example, developing relevant examination papers and procedures, gathering and interpreting to the course team 'formative' feedback, and instituting 'summative' evaluation oriented towards remake of the course or individual units.

(v) Remaking a course or units through interpreting evaluation data and through carrying out all the activities already described, for the new course.

The BBC producer (appointed by the faculty's senior producer)

The producers, often experts in academic fields as well as in production, work closely with academics in the course team in producing the television and radio components of the course (see section F).

The course assistant (appointed by the faculty)

The course assistant has a dual function within the team : both administrative and academic. A course assistant participates in the work of a course team or teams and undertakes a wide variety of tasks concerned with the development and production of the various components of the course materials. He will be responsible for a wide range of academic, editorial and administrative duties with a reasonable balance being attained between predominantly academic duties and other responsibilities. In particular he may be required to undertake all or some of the following duties :

(a) acting as liaison between course team and Faculty Editor, Project Control Officer, Faculty Accountant, Publishing, Purchasing, Media, Correspondence Services and other operational areas.

(b) assisting in the creation of course material (for example writing or contributing to the writing of discussion papers units and programmes; home experiments; writing Computer Marked Assignments; Self Assessment Questions; compiling bibliographies; helping to make radio and television programmes and writing television and radio notes).

The editor

Editorial functions vary from faculty to faculty. The role of the editor, *vis-a-vis* the course team, is to advise the course team chairman on all editorial aspects of quality, costs and scheduling of the course and to inform him of the relevant University rules within which the course team must operate; the editor's function is

to edit the course materials as well as to advise the course team chairman.

The designer (appointed by Director of Media Development)

The designer is responsible, in collaboration with the academic involved, for producing the necessary diagrams, illustrations and cover designs for the course units, and for marking up manuscripts.

The liaison librarian (appointed by Librarian)

The services offered by liaison librarians to course teams are as follows :

(i) *Picture search* for the printed course components. For procedures see section D.
(ii) *Current awareness* Regular select lists of new publications and occasionally films. Film material is hired or purchased through the Media Library.
(iii) *Guides to the literature and libraries* Assistance with the preparation of guides for use in courses.
(iu) *Preparation for new courses* Help with compiling lists of books relevant to courses which may need to be bought for the library.
(v) *Literature searches*
(vi) *Audio-visual materials* In conjunction with the Media Library, searching published catalogues to identify and locate material, e.g. films, tapes, records.
(vii) Press cuttings service Includes over 4000 items on various topics, serving chiefly the faculty of Technology. Current information can be sent to interested individuals. Back files are available for consultation.

The library staff will be pleased to give details of other library services.

Faculty accountant (appointed by Bursar)

The faculty accountant provides the Dean and the other faculty staff with such financial, advisory, systems and management services as may be needed to enable the faculty to achieve its objectives. He will produce procedural guidance for course teams

in relation to Course Team Budgets covering all Direct Student Cost implications.

Staff workload and expertise

Two general points need to be made here. The first of these concerns collaboration with other institutions. While the University encourages the importation of academic staff from elsewhere to help write specific courses, whether as temporary OU staff members, external consultants, or in some other way, there can be practical and legal difficulties. The Academic Secretariat will be pleased to advise on this.

The second point relates to the size of course teams, which for high level courses is often small. Disquiet has been expressed within the University about teams with a small active membership; the matter of availability of authors is particularly crucial in such cases, as is author workload, especially where course reader production is involved.

Course team meetings

Course teams evolve their own unique patterns of working, but have to meet the formal requirements given in paragraph 3 above. They meet fairly frequently, often once a week or fortnight during the peak of activity. Meetings are chaired by the course team chairman, with the course assistant usually acting as secretary. Agenda items can include matters such as the formal approval of course and unit titles, authorship of units, scheduling, critical discussions of draft correspondence texts, proposed home experiments, TV or radio programmes, draft assignments etc.

All materials to be sent to students must be approved by course teams.

ASSIGNMENTS AND PROJECTS

General

The purpose of having assignments (and hence projects) are two :

(i) to enable the student to pace himself, working towards defined and regular short-term objectives and receiving information back from the University on the nature and

quality of his performance and

(ii) to provide part of the assessment of the student for the award of a credit.

The University does not wish either purpose to exclude the other. The first purpose is the reason that course teams are advised to design assignments at the same time as, and as part of the same process as, the writing of correspondence units and the designing of broadcasts.

The two types of assignment are tutor-marked (TMAs) and *computer-marked* (CMAs). Some courses now have *projects* which usually count as a defined number of TMAs for assessment purposes. (see paragraph 36 for a reference to their relationship)

Information will be found in other sections on the role of the tutor (section K) and on the maximum and minimum members of TMAs and CMAs which a course may have. (section A)

Tutor-marked assignments

General

There are broadly two sorts of TMA : those with only one question, and those with several, shorter ones. In the first case there is no need for any indication of how the TMA is to be marked (except in Tutor Notes) but, in the second, course teams must clearly specify the relative weights to be given to each question.

Multiple-answer TMAs

Course teams should ensure that the relationship of questions to answer boxes on the student reply form CT 3 is absolutely clear. As the boxes are labelled 1 to 20, so normally should the questions be. There are various alternative patterns for this sort of TMA :

(i) the student is expected to answer all the questions set, and all questions count towards the overall grade (although not necessarily equally since differential weightings can be applied);

(ii) the student *must* answer certain questions while others are optional or teaching questions only. Only compulsory

questions are included in the overall grade calculation. Non-assessment or optional questions are not counted;

(iii) the assignment might have alternative options e.g. the student must answer one out of two alternatives. This implies that alternatives are equally weighted:

(iv) an assignment can contain a choice of one question from, say, three or four.

Dates associated with the return of assignments, together with information on units to which assignments relate are required in the June of the year before the relevant presentation, for publication the following January in the Broadcast and Assignment Calendar

Tutor guidance

Tutors should receive clear guidance from course teams on the ways that TMAs should be marked (see section K). This is of particular importance with multiple-question TMAs. Sometimes tutors have not been told clearly enough how the breakdown of the assignment into parts and questions relates to the 20 boxes on the TMA form. Clearly, unless the question scores go into the right boxes, the computer will calculate a different overall grade from the tutor's, and reject the form. Using alternative options requires particular care here. Each question must be identified with a particular box on the assignment form; and the grade for a question, even if it is the only question, must go into the box assigned to that question number.

Wherever possible assignment divisions (i.e. questions) should be numbered from 1 to 20, to correspond with the question score boxes on the form. Where this is not the case the tutor must be shown by means of a diagram, or table, how the question numbering relates to the 20 boxes on the TMA form.

Obviously course teams should encourage tutors to keep to marking schemes compatible with those which the computer has been programmed to use. A number of TMA forms are rejected because the conversion scales used in certain assignments are not consistent with those built into the system; thus in a number of marginal cases the computer calculates a different overall grade from the tutor, though both have got their arithmetic correct.

There are currently two scales. The alphabetic one was used

in 1978 in Arts, Social Sciences, Educational Studies and some of Technology; the numeric scale for the rest.

Meaning	*Alphabetic range*	*Numerical range*
Excellent	A	9.0—10.0
Good pass	B	7.0— 8.99
Clear pass	C	5.5— 6.99
Bare pass	D	4.5— 5.49
Bare fail	F	3.0— 4.49
Bad fail	R	0— 2.99

(Tutors using the numeric scale must keep to ordinary numbers and should not be asked to use percentages or other notations).

Some assignments are marked on a scale different from the two scales used on the CT3 form. When this is the case your tutor notes *must* provide conversion tables. Tables may also be provided for deriving the overall grade.

In writing notes for tutors, course teams should be aware of certain procedural constraints :

(i) *One* digit only on the 0-10 scale can be entered in the question grade boxes on the TMA form.

(ii) *Three* digits may be entered in the overall grade box, one before and two after the decimal point.

(iii) The score entered in the overall grade box must be the *exact* sum of the weighted question grade scores. This is because the computer will check the scores in the question grade boxes against the overall score and reject any forms where the figures do not agree. *Once the question grade scores have been decided upon, the overall grade score must follow automatically from this.*

(iv) The overall grade score must *not* be calculated from original scores (if any) which have not been entered in the question grade boxes. (This happened with a number of courses in 1974).

(v) In a single question assignment exactly the same figure must be entered in both question and overall grade boxes. Thus it would not be possible to enter a '7' in question

grade box 1, and '7.33' in the overall grade box, since the form would be rejected. The figure '7' would have to be entered in both boxes, and not just in the overall grade box.

The converted weighted scores are then added together and the total is re-converted to an alpha grade for entry into the overall grade box according to the following scale :

0	to	2.99	=	B
3.0	to	4.49	=	F
4.5	to	5.49	=	D
5.5	to	6.99	=	C
7.0	to	8.99	=	B
9.0	to	10.0	=	A

However, course teams using the alphabetic grades may specify marking on a numeric scale and then subsequent conversion of individual qustion scores to the alpha scale. It is important, however, that the overall grade is then calculated from the alpha grades entered in the question grade boxes and not from the original numeric score.

Projects

Some courses have incorporated student projects into the TMA system, and in these cases the projects very often are worth more than one TMA, with perhaps an initial submission of a plan, followed by a draft. Both these stages might be non-assessed, with a final stage of submission of the finished project. This would be assessed, and indeed, might be given a weighting of one or more TMAs-in this case, usually three.

In such cases a TMA form would have to be completed by the tutor for each *national* TMA. Thus if a project was given a triple weighting the tutor would complete *three* TMA forms, one with the actual assignment number, and the other two, with 'dummy' assignment numbers. The same grade or score must be entered on all three forms.

Monitoring

Staff tutors or assistant staff tutors (or sometimes course team

members) monitor tutor-marked assignments to attempt to ensure uniform marking standards for all students, and to maintain high standards of commenting upon assignments by tutors. Monitoring should correct any deviance in the tutoring service before any serious hardship or concern is caused to students, and it is for the monitor to take steps to correct any tutor whom he feels is not performing satisfactorily.

The Assignment Handling Office of the Examinations Office selects a certain number of each tutor's assignments according to a monitoring scheme, photocopies them (except in the case of Maths, where monitoring is carried out 'live') and forwards them to monitors.

Monitoring in 1978 is based on a four-level scheme, whereby tutors are subjected to four levels of intensity of monitoring according to their performance. There is one basic scheme, but *each faculty does, in fact, make slight modifications to the scheme for its own course.* The Mathematics Faculty has a different scheme based on two levels of monitoring.

The scheme as it operates for the individual tutor is as follows :

Level A One script per three TMAs is randomly selected starting with the first TMA.
Tutors who served satisfactorily in the previous year start at this level.
Tutors may be recommended to this level by a monitor, and remain at this level until notified to the contrary. This level may only be used for full credit courses.

Level B One script from each TMA is randomly selected. Tutors are automatically placed at this level after two TMAs have been monitored at level C, or on request by a monitor (from Level A).

Level C Three scripts from each TMA are selected, if possible one 'F', one 'R' and one other grade. New tutors on any course start at this level. After two TMAs have been monitored at this level, the tutor is placed in level B. The monitor may request that the tutor be placed in level D, but after one TMA has been monitored at level D, the tutor return automatically to level C.

Level D Six scripts with varying grades are selected from each

TMAs. After one TMA has been monitored at this level, the tutor returns to level C. Tutors may be placed in this level at the request of the monitor.

Additional information on the performance of tutors is provided by the 'Kosmat' analysis produced by Data Processing. This is a statistical procedure which is used to compare the distribution of grades given by a particular tutor to his students in a particular course, with the distribution of grades given by all tutors in that course nationally.

Cases of particularly unsatisfactory tutoring, such as excessive severity or leniency, poor commenting, or delays in returning assignments, should be brought to the attention of examination boards by monitors.

Scheduling and operational aspects

Course teams must specify scoring parameters, where needed, for TMAs in close detail, and a marking parameter form (coded AD074) is available from the Examinations Office. Course teams should return the form to the Examination Office *at least four weeks* before the due date for the return of the assignment, and should keep a copy for themselves.

The critical importance of the assignment number to the processing of assignments cannot be emphasised enough. A wrongly numbered assignment will be processed late, wrongly, or not at all.

Course teams can help by :

(i) Printing the assignment number boldly or framed (or both) clearly at the top of the page setting the assignment.

(ii) Reminding the student that he must write this number on every page of every assignment.

(iii) Providing, if possible, a title for the assignment or a short description of its content, to enable the tutor to check with minimum effort that the content and number of a student's assignment relate. The student could be asked to include the title on his written assignment for note by his course tutor. Alternatively the Tutor Notes could contain a brief description.

Computer marked assignments

General

Setting CMAs is complicated, and a booklet entitled 'CMA instructions' is available from the Examinations Office. Advice should be sought from the IET course team member who should also check the parameters before sending them to the Examinations Office.

Setting parameters

The intention to use CMAs must of course be included in course proposals sent to the Academic Secretariat for second stage approval (see section B). Detailed parameters for each CMA must be notified on the Input Data Form to the Examinations Officer *at least six weeks* before the due date of the assignment. A copy of the questions for the CMA should be attached.

The Examinations Office and Data Processing will carry out preliminary checking before Data Processing test the CMA fully. Any discrepencies, at either stage, between the desired and actual results will be closely investigated and, where appropriate, referred back to the course team.

Amending parameters

It may be necessary to amend parameters after they have been tested and put onto file. All such requests to the Examinations Office must be confirmed by a complete set of Input Data Forms from the course team. Normally the Examinations Office will then ask Data Processing to delete the current parameters and then initiate the standard procedure for putting parameters onto the computer file. If there is insufficient time to follow this procedure, the Examinations Officer may send the new parameter set together with a list of the changes from the original, to Data Processing, who will amend the existing parameters held on the computer. The amended parameters will not be tested and the Examinations Office will be asked to certify that the parameters held are those specified by the course team.

In 1974 errors and ambiguities were often discovered in CMA questions when it was too late to amend the questions, i.e. when a number of CMAs had already been submitted by students. This necessitated a large number of alterations to CMA parameters, and

a subsequent large number of resorces, i.e. the marking of all forms again for a particular assignment according to new parameters. This often caused confusion to students, and in some cases students' grades were actually reduced as a result of re-scores, apart from the extra work involved in the Examinations Office and Data Processing.

The number of responses required should thus be made clear to the student. One of the major reasons for errors in the questions, necessitating amendments to parameters was that the number of responses required for a particular question was not specified. Under the CMA scoring system, if a student makes too many responses, he will be penalised, and thus lose all marks for a question.

Assessment

For each block used on the CMA form a block score is derived according to the specified scoring options. Block scores are summed to produce a total score for the assignment, which is eventually used in the calculation of the Overall Computer Marked Assignment score. From the total score an overall assignment grade on the A-R scale is derived from one of six faculty conversion tables.

Continuous assessment grades

In November of each year the assignment files (CMA and TMA files) are closed, and further processed to provide Overall TMA Scores Overall CMA Scores, Overall Continuous Assessment Scores, and Overall Continuous Assessment Grades for such student on file.

The course team must decide upon the weighting to be given to the two different parts of continuous assessment (unless it is a course without CMAs), and *inform students* of this weighting. Thus it might be decided to weight TMAs and CMAs equally, i.e. 50 : 50, or perhaps to give a greater weighting to TMAs, e.g. a 75 : 25 ratio.

The first step is, where appropriate, to exclude from the CMA and TMA files any assignments which will not be used for assessment. Course teams specify such assignment numbers on form E41.

Students must of course be informed, *before* doing an

assignment, that it will not count towards their assessment (unless the decision to discount is taken because of some irreparable error on the University's part after the assignment has been done, in which case students must be told promptly at that point).

Formulae used to calculate grades are available from the Examinations Office; the procedure is carried out by the computer on instructions from the Examinations and Assessment Committee.

PART FOUR

RESEARCHES ON DISTANCE EDUCATION

9

The Lesson : Objective and content

Dr. B.K. Sinha

Education through correspondence is very different from the formal education that is imparted in the regular colleges. In the latter the students sit in front of the teacher,who is lecturing in the class room. The lecturer marks the response of the students by seeing their faces even if the latter do not put questions to the former. The opportunity for clearing doubts on seeking further explanations in distance education is not available because he may be sitting hundreds or thousands of miles away from the teacher. Under the circumstance he has to depend upon reading materials prepared by the teacher. Thus the backbone of correspondence teaching is the material in print which is sent to the students at regular intervals without any oral supplementation. Such study notes are calles lessons.

The lesson meant for the correspondence students must be very different from the lectures delivered in colleges to the students. That is why, the lesson written for the distant learners must possess a skill which must be different from the class-room lecture. In the class-room the lecturer can modify his language, methodology etc. on the spot in accordance with the response or requirement of the students. But the lesson writer does not have that advantage. He has to imagine the problems of his readers, anticipate their difficulties and then write his lesson in a manner

*This paper was presented at the workshop on production of instructional materials for Correspondence Education held in Patiala in Nov., 1982.

that it may be readily intelligible to the readers.

What that manner will be, is entirely to be decided by the actual lesson writer, who will make use of his experience and imagination in writing out the script. There are, however, certain points worth considering by the distinguished persons present here. Some of the problems confront the lesson writer again and again. Some such problems were highlighted at an all-India Seminar on the art of writing lessons held a few months back at Patna.

As for the objective it may be pointed out that a lesson is designed to teach a student the method to approach a subject, a topic or a book, and to give him enough lead so that once he is fairly on the way to understanding his topic, he may do even without the lesson. It is never a substitute for a text book or the recommended book. A correspondence course lesson would give only a handshake, while a set of notes would give a complete embrace, as it were, without let or go once the student is clasped, A good lesson should help and guide rather than overwhelm the student with its enormity and volume.

But sometimes we find lesson writers acting as researchers. They bring the lofty manner of class-room teaching to bear upon the lesson—which they think would be open for perusal not only to the students but to their own colleagues and detractors as well. In doing so they sacrifice the very purpose for which the lesson is meant. Such practice must be discouraged. But this does not mean that lessons should be over simplified. In order to reach the maximum number of students, the lesson should be of a type to be easily understood by them. The lesson writer should visualize a student sitting in the privacy of his own room ready to have a mute dialogue with the lesson.

The main objective of the lesson cannot be achieved unless we have a competent lesson writer. That takes us to the question of academic qualifications and mental equipment of the lesson writer. Nothing much can be done in this respect because there is no institution in this country for training lesson writers. There are numerous training colleges for teachers engaged in imparting formal education but none for correspondence education. Hence much depends on the individual skill of the actual teacher. Quality of the lesson will depend largely on the individual capabilities and interest of the writer. But those who have attended Seminars and symposia conducted by institutions of correspondence education or

those who are conversant with the growing literature on this subject will certainly have an edge over others. This cannot, however, be regarded as a pre-condition for allotment of work, because this type of education is still in its infancy and it will not always be possible to find such persons in all the institutions of distance education.

The quality of a lesson may also depend upon the fact whether it has been written by a single or a group of persons. The Open University people are trying to get lessons written by a committee or a board. In that case there is a board for every subject. Each lesson is planned by that board, which then assigns the work of writing to any one of them or somebody else with proper guidelines. When the draft is prepared it is again discussed and finalised by the board. But the difficulty is that all the correspondence institutions of this country cannot afford to have such a system. Moreover, this method is expensive, and, at the same time slow. Lessons cannot be prepared as quickly as desirable. Therefore the more convenient method is that the lessons should be written by one individual, who must, of course, be mentally equipped and dedicated to his work. The remuneration must also be such which may act as an incentive.

Lessons written by a single teacher must be reviewed by another senior teacher or a group of teachers before being sent to the press for printing. I believe this is the universal practice but the question of motivation and incentive is important in this case also. Language vetting, editing and proof-reading are no less important. The UGC has prescribed rates of remuneration for the different categories of workers. At least that must be paid if we expect them to perform their work with dedication and perfection.

Coming to the content of the lesson an important question that arises is whether it should be written only for the average students or its level should be very high so as to cater to the needs of brilliant student alone. There is no doubt that some of the students are brilliant, but, in general, they are of average merit. They are either in-service people, housewives or students of inferior merit who could not be admitted in regular colleges. Our experience is that even the class room lectures in regular colleges are not meant for the actually brilliant students. The weakest link or the general mental level of the students generally determines the

quality of lectures. Some additional information is however provided for the brilliant students in the general lectures as well as in the tutorial class, but such an information can also be given for the more advanced students at the end of the lesson. In the response sheets also the teacher (who corrects them) may make such suggestions to the promising students.

A more pertinent question with regard to content is whether the lesson should be a substitute for the class room lecture or it should replace the text books. On this point the general consensus is that the purpose of a lecture in the class room is to give broad and general outline of the subject to be taught. Then the salient features of that particular topic are indicated to the students, who are expected to follow it up with further studies suggested in course of the lecture. Let us take a concrete example, Suppose Wordsworth's "Solitary Reaper or his sonnet" Composed Upon the Westminster Bridge" is to be taught in the class, There the teacher, before actually dealing with the poem will give an idea of the period in which Wordsworth flourished. Something must be said about the Romantic Age and romantic poems in general. And then the life and character of Wordsworth along with the factor moulding the poet's personality may also be indicated. All that will form the background for discussing the actual poem. That will take at least two three lectures. Can we afford to do that in a single lesson without making it too lengthy and boaring to the readers, most of whom have neither the willingness nor the patience to go through the ordeal ? Let us take another example. Suppose the lecturer has to discuss the characteristics of sovereignty. The lecturer will naturally start with the state. After giving an idea of the State the teacher will like to acquaint the students with the different elements of the State. He will then introduce Sovereignty. In this process he may have to say many things in making the abstract concept intelligible to the students. That may take a lot of time after which the characteristics of Sovereignty will come up for actual discussion. The whole thing may take at least three lectures, but a distant learner cannot be fed with three lessons on the characteristics of Sovereignty.

The aim of correspondence institutions is not merely to send answers to important questions. The lessons, must, as a rule, cover all that a teacher should deal with in the class room. Grouped together these lessons could read like a monograph,

specially written to cater to the needs of the students who may or may not have the additional aid of other study materials. In case of regular students reading text books or other reference books becomes indispensable besides the class room lectures. That makes it clear that a lesson cannot be a substitute for class-room lectures. It has to be much more than that. The lecturer takes the freedom to say many things (in course of his lecture) which may not be relevant. But the poor lesson writer cannot indulge in such a luxury. Every word written by him is under constant scrutiny of students and others. So he has to be correct, accurate and also precise. That requires great skill, at least more than that of a teacher who is lecturing in the class room.

On the question of replacement of textbooks or other reading materials we will do well to remember that a lesson is a set of notes, specifically tailored for a distant learner, but not to replace the text books on the recommended books. On the other hand, a lesson-unit is but a link in a chain and each unit is complete only in the 'totality' of its approach to the subject and not in terms of detailed treatment. A stereotyped set of notes, on the other hand, is designed to spoonfeed the student by being complete in the totality of its treatment, without having any margin for the student to think redesign, rearrange or refabricate his material. But a good lesson should, besides giving adequate reading material leave sufficient scope for the student to make further study and improve his answer if he has higher ambition.

Since the distant learner is either employed whole time or has other work or domestic commitments, he may not be in a position to visit a library or buy books, other than the most necessary ones. It may not even be possible for him to attend the Personal Contact Programmes. It is therefore desirable that his lessons should be complete and comprehensive. But, at the same time, the text books or recommended books should not appear to be unnecessary for the student after reading a lesson. On the other hand he should feel the need for reading the text book and other recommended books. The credit of the lesson writer, in fact, depends on the amount of interest that he has aroused in the reader.

To fulfil that purpose the writer should mention at the end of the narrative a short bibliography for the use of the more advanced students. There is no doubt that some very good

students are having their education through correspondence. They need more information than the average reader for obtaining high position in the university examination. For such students bibliography will be of immense help. But that should be as short as possible and relate to books easily available in the Indian market.

The content of a lesson cannot be complete without the use of maps, charts, graphs, diagrams and other visual and memory aids. But these must be given only when absolutely necessary. Too many of them may make the lesson dull and undigestable. But those which are necessary must be simple and intelligible. These should be explained properly in the text because the reader is not expected to have a teacher (as in the class room) to explain them. If necessary, a set of blanks sheets may also be attached with the lesson so that the student may try his hand on making graphs and diagrams. This needs an extra care on the part of the lesson writer.

While it is necessary for a lesson to be academically sound in terms of facts, figures and reading material presented by the author and properly edited, the style should not be drab and bookish. This aspect is generally overlooked, but it needs adequate attention. But then the question arises as to what it should be like. Should the narrative be in the form of class room lecture, or radio talk or in the form of a dialogue. In this connection one must remember that the lesson writer should not adopt the style of narrative found in the course books or bazar notes, which the student can easily have from the book stalls. It should not, at the same time, be absolutely in the form of a dialogue or a radio talk. It should be a combination of all these. How to combine all these forms so as to make the answer interesting will actually depend upon the competence of the script writer. No cut-and-dried formula can be prescribed for it. Attempt, must however, be made to address the reader directly so that he may feel involved and interested.

The language of the script should be simple, lucid, easily comprehensible and free from technical jargon and useless verbosity and pompousness. It should be everyday conversational language which puts no strain on the mind of the reader. If examples and illustrations are to be given, these must be chosen from everyday life and the environment in which the general reader is supposed to live. These must not be from the lives of Englishmen,

Americans, Chinese or the Japanese about which the reader knows little. In that case the student will not be able to appreciate. Therefore, care must be taken to make the lesson as homely as possible.

Still another quality which the lesson must possess is that it should be an organic whole though possessed of several parts. The student should be able to get a total general picture of the topic after going through the lesson. For this purpose it is necessary that the topic should be developed logically and systematically so that each subsequent statement should emerge from the previous one in a natural manner. For example, if we have to write a lesson on liberty, we shall have first to define and explain its meaning and then distinguish it from licence. In this way, one may logically expand the subject.

All this takes us to the question of length of the lesson but here again one cannot prescribe any cut-and-dried formula. The length of the lesson in each case will be determined by the topic on which it is being written. The lesson must contain all the important points so that the topic may be understood as a whole by the reader. Only then he will be able to write his answer correctly even if there is a twist in the question. The narrative must not be sketchy or lop-sided as is generally found in the bazar notes and other substandard help books. For want of time or money many students can't afford to buy or read books. So the lesson has to be comprehensive. But that does not mean that it should be very lengthy. Length, as a rule must be determined by the need of the topic. How much the student will write in the examination hall will be decided by the examinee in view of the question and the time at his disposal.

The lesson comes to an end with a list of questions on that topic. That list need not be very long but must cover all important aspects of the subject matter of the lesson. These questions are necessary for testing the knowledge of the students and to prepare them for the examination. The students can also write their response sheets in the light of those questions.

10

Teaching English Literature To Distant Learners—The Mayor of Casterbridge

ASHA S. KANWAR*

This paper is a preliminary attempt to consider the teaching of English literature and more specifically the teaching of the novel, through distance education. It is preliminary because (a) this is an area which has been neglected in recent discussions that have concentrated primarily on the question of language teaching and (b) as the courses are still being developed and as there is no feedback available, it is only possible to raise issues rather than to present conclusions. The paper is divided into two parts. The first deals briefly and more generally with the problem of teaching English literature. It is crucial to determine what we are to teach before coming to grips with the question of how we are to teach it. The second part deals specifically with the multi-media mix such as print, audio, video and face-to-face contact with reference to their role in inserting the invisible teacher into the text. We will examine the advantages and dangers inherent in each mode, by taking up specific illustrations from our teaching of Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*.

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I

The English literature paper offered in most undergraduate course is usually (a) anglocentric; (b) outdated; and (c) compulsory. Having taught undergraduates in a rural college, I have seen that most students do not possess the basic skills in comprehension and communication and yet must plod through English literature. The whole exercise of interpreting a Wordsworth poem is reduced to systematic translation. Even in urban colleges, teaching English literature is usually limited to paraphrasing. This then becomes an enforced routine and one that alienates the student at two levels—the linguistic and the cultural. In the classroom, the student is confronted with not only an alien tongue but also with descriptions of an alien culture. Generations of Indian children have sung full-throated rhymes dedicated to 'four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie' without ever discovering what a pie is. What then results is 'a culture of silence' indirectly supervised by the 'director culture' through its 'power elites'.[1]

If English literature courses are to be meaningful, they must (a) attempt to disperse notions of 'anglocentricity' by extending the existing parameters to include all literature written in English; (b) attempt at maintaining a balance between literature written in previous ages and contemporary literature and (c) offer English literature courses as optional. At IGNOU English literature courses are being offered as electives at the undergraduate level. The three courses being developed focus specifically on prose, poetry and drama so that students interested in a particular genre may acquire adequate exposure to it either for further self-enrichment or for a post-graduate degree in English literature. We assume that only motivated students possessing basic competence in the language will opt for these courses. However, linguistic competence does not presuppose literary competence. As Jonathan Culler puts it :

> '. . . anyone wholly unacquainted with literature and unfamiliar with the conventions by which fictions are read, would be quite baffled . . . His knowledge of the language would enable him to understand phrases and sentences, but he would not know, quite literally, what to *make* of this strange concatenation of phrases. He would be unable to read it as literature . . . .'[2]

Teaching English literature is quite different from teaching English language because, among other things, in literature it is difficult to quantify the net results in terms of proficiency achieved. The question that then arises is that can we teach a subject as complex and varied as literature ? According to Christopher J. Brumfit, 'we simply create the conditions for successful learning'.[3] How can we create these conditions ? We can do this in several ways. By exposing the individual to samples of 'great' literature, we can hope to sensitize her responses to other literature. When dealing with literature from a different culture, we can make local connections. (The wife-sale in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* can be seen in relation to the overall harassment of women in India. Similarly the convention of the skimmington ride has a local parallel in the donkey ride usually reserved for the disgraced.) It is also important to make the student alert to the ethics of what is to be highlighted and what underplayed. Instead of stressing the fatalism in Hardy, one could focus instead on the progressive aspect of the text, To be a competent critic the student does not need to read every poem or every novel ever written but needs to have a satisfactory range of methodological skills. This is not to suggest that after acquiring a set of formulae, the student will be able to tackle subsequent texts. Only through persistent application will the student get better and better as her perceptions and judgements are sharpened.

In a conventional class, the teacher is confronted with students according to whose responses she can modify, regulate and carry out this programme. But in a distance education set-up the student is a faceless entity—a hypothetical construct :

> There are those who want to be entertained, there are those who want an easy pass, there are those who want to cover as much educationally relevant material as possible, there are those that want to think deeply, and there are those who want to browse and explore.[4]

Our students then are not a monolithic mass but an extremely heterogeneous corpus. Who and what level are we addressing ? This is one of the basic problems of distance teaching. Numbers are not important for whether we have two students or two thousand, the aim is to arouse their interest and to sustain it. In

order to ensure that all our students, whatever their motivation or ability, will get something from our courses, we approach the teaching of literature through various media, the chief among them being print.

II

PRINT MATERIALS

Print forms the major medium through which instruction is imparted in most distance education institutions including IGNOU. According to Peters (1977), printed lessons are more useful than TV or radio teaching.[5] This is supplemented by audios, videos and face-to-face counselling. On the other hand: the UKOU has an integrated approach so that print material, audio, video and face-to-face teaching along with radio and television broadcasts are an integral part of the whole course. Counselling sessions are also conducted by telephone whereas in our case this is only possible in privileged and limited sectors. Lack of access to technology then constitutes the basic difference between first and third world educational approaches. However, this problem could be negotiated to some extent by providing the multi-media mix to the grassroots through the various study centres that are coming up all over the country.

Using print, how can we effectively teach *The Mayor of Casterbridge*? We know that novels are easy to read but difficult to study. Most people are novel readers but for many the enjoyment and interest is related primarily to plot development. But a study of the novel would involve not only enjoyment but also awareness. The aim is to help the student to get more out of reading novels, to become a discriminating reader. Thus awareness of the various components of the novel heighten a student's enjoyment for now she is responding to a variety of elements rather than just the plot. While some intervention is needed to help the student to read analytically, care is also to be taken not to volunteer too many explanations as this would necessarily interfere with the enjoyment.

IGNOU has undertaken to print *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and to make it available to the student with the study units. We have serialised the novel by breaking it into twelve sections accord-

ing to the major episodes. The breaks are also made on the principle that a student cannot be expected to study the complete text at one stretch. Each break is followed by a short commentary that sums up the preceding section, points out any interesting feature of the author's technique (for instance. in chapter XXVIII, the hilarious exchange between the furmity seller and Stubberd can be compared with a similar scene in Dickens) and by asking certain stimulating questions, arouses the student's curiosity leading on to the next instalment. The commentary provided is to be printed in a different colour so that (a) it is highlighted, (b) attracts the reader's attention and (c) stimulates interest. Footnotes provide students with explanations of dialect, foreign words, classical and biblical allusions. Students are expected to consult dictionaries for other difficult words. The teacher in the text withdraws in the case of R.K. Narayan's *A Tiger for Malgudi* which is the next novel on the course. The aim is to develop the critical faculty amongst students so that they may develop the confidence of their opinions and read other novels with competence.

STRUCTURE

When the teacher enters the classroom, she outlines the main topics that are to be discussed. How do we substitute this in our study unit ? By placing the structure at the very beginning of the unit, we can acquaint the student with the general topics for discussion. Each unit has a particular format which structures the material in such a way that it incorporates objectives, a general introduction which includes a study guide on how to read the unit as well as a discussion of each topic separately with self-check exercises at the end of each section. We round off the unit with a summing up and a suggested reading list. Let us look at structure of a Unit from *The Mayor of Casterbridge* :

2.0 Objectives
2.1 Characterisation
2.1.1 Henchard
2.1.2 Hardy's Women
2.1.3 The Chorus
EXERCISE

2.2 Background
EXERCISE
2.3 Language and Style
EXERCISE
2.4 Point of View
EXERCISE
2.5 Summing Up
2.6 Glossary
2.7 Suggested Reading
2.8 Critical Comments
ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

This format is aimed at motivating the student, facilitating learning and assimilation by clear and systematic presentation of material, reinforcement by repetition, and encouragement by self-check exercises. Once the structure has been outlined we state the objectives in behavioural terms.

BEHAVIOURAL OBJECTIVES

What are behavioural objectives ? When we learn something, we do not just acquire facts and figures, we also learn how to do something. In order to motivate the students, it is important to state at the very outset what they will be able to do at the end of the unit. Bulleted objectives are then stated in brief and precise terms. 'You will be able to : identify; distinguish: to list; construct: compare; solve, to explain'. Vague terms like know; appreciate; understand and get an idea of are usually avoided. For example, let us look at the objectives in the study unit outlined above :

If you read this unit carefully, you will be able to ,

- write character sketches independently;
- explain the role of background in Hardy's novels;
- assess the significance of Hardy's style;
- identify the effects achieved by multiple points of view.

What are the pedagogic advantages of stating behavioural objectives ? If students know what they are expected to achieve, (a) they are better able to evaluate their progress; (b) gain satisfaction and encouragement when they have achieved their aim and

(c) they will also try to make the effort to achieve their aim.[6] We have discovered that once students are used to this format, they feel more comfortable with subsequent study materials. Stating objectives is even useful from the point of view of the course writer because they help decide the course content, the way it will be structured and what media will be used.

THE BODY OF THE UNIT

This deals will the various topics to be covered. How the topics will be handled will depend upon the individual course writer but at the undergraduate level, the emphasis is on explication rather than interpretation. The style must be that of a 'guided didactic conversation' as Holmberg puts it. As units are self-instructional, with the emphasis on 'learner autonomy' (Wedemeyer) they must be made interactive by placing thought-provoking in-text questions. The answer can be provided almost immediately or a few lines can be left blank for the student's response. For example, when discussing Henchard's character, we could ask 'In real life, could you possibly have sympathy with a husband who sells his life ? The answer is clearly no. Why then does Henchard still win our sympathy ?' It is important to provide the answer once the aim of provoking some response has been achieved.

ILLUSTRATIONS

The text can incorporate photos, drawings, diagrams, maps, graphs and charts. These are used to attract the student's attention to the key episodes within the text. They mainly have a motivational role and provide support material when teaching a concept. According to James Hartley, illustrations fulfil one or more of the following roles :

1. affective role : enhance interest and motivation;
2. attentional role : attract and direct attention;
3. didactic : show rather than tell and provide additional information;
4. supportive : enhance the learning of less able learners
5. retentional : facilitate long-term recall.[7]

The positioning of illustrations is important in that it helps to arrest attention. They are particularly useful in depicting visual concepts, for example, the student can get an idea of what Henchard or the other characters look like. They also help in depicting spatial concepts by presenting the relative size of objects. The insignificance of Hardy's characters against the backdrop of the vast Egdon Heath, serves to highlight his belief that human beings are placed within an indifferent and hostile universe. Illustrations are particularly useful in courses in English literature especially when one is dealing with a different culture and age. The weaker student benefits particularly from visual representations. In the Units on *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, we would include a picture of Hardy, a map of England highlighting 'Wessex' with a photograph or painting of Dorchester and an illustration of the ancient Roman amphitheatre. This would set the novel in a specific space. A picture of a nineteenth century pub, a sketch of a skimmington ride and stills from the BBC film based on the novel would frame the cultural context. Key episodes like the wife-sale, Henchard and Farfrae's fight in the loft, Henchard contemplating suicide at Ten Hatches Hole and the final symbolic image of the dead goldfinch would greatly facilitate the student's understanding of the plot development of the novel.

EXERCISES

Exercises are placed almost after each section. Answers to these are placed at the end of each unit. These are either self-check exercises which test the student's comprehension of what she/he has just read and help the student to gauge his/her progress. These encourage and motivate the learner. These can either be short answer exercises or they can be multiple-choice, objective or essay type. Besides, there are other exercises which test the student not just for comprehension but for skills acquired. For example, students can first be told of Hardy's technique of characterisation :

> How do we 'know' a character in a novel ? Let us presume that the character is called X. The novelist can use several techniques. The narrator may either describe X, or other characters in the novel may talk about him. X may be presented in conversation with others and this may reveal

some traits of his character. His actions may further enable us to get a completer picture of his personality. Hardy uses all these techniques and more, he usually begins by describing outward appearance and then relates this to the character's inner nature. For example, Henchard's dark, fiery eye reveals his tempestuous nature. Hardy also makes use of imagery in order to reinforce the dominant traits of a particular character. For instance, Henchard's love for Farfrae is described as 'tigerish'—this not only refers to its tempestuous nature but also to its destructive potential.

If you keep the above guidelines in mind, you will be able to appreciate and explain Hardy's multi-dimensional approach to characterisation. It is for this reason that we are not discussing all the characters, as we expect you to draw your own character sketches independently.' (Unit 2, p. 2)

Some characters are discussed as an exercise in initial hand-holding and gradually at the end of the section the student can be told : 'You have now had adequate exposure to Hardy's method of character delineation. We would now like you to write the character sketch of Farfrae in about 250-300 words. Perhaps you should go back to the first paragraph on page 2 to look over the main points before you draw examples from the novel.' The attempt is to lead to independent and autonomous learning. Terminal questions are placed at the end of the unit and are indicative of the model questions that students could expect for examinations.

EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

It is essential to frame questions that require thinking on the part of the student. If questions are framed solely on the basis of the content, there is a great danger of students neglecting the course materials and cramming some 'important' questions at the last minute to negotiate the exams. As it is explanatory 'bazaar' notes on IGNOU courses have already started appearing in the market. A lot will depend upon the imaginative and innovative nature of exam questions as according to Catherine Belsey they 'identify the boundaries of the discipline and define what is permissible to 'discuss' . . . '[8] Instead of asking for straightforward

character sketches, themes or plot-construction the students could be questioned on different lines. The student can be given a passage from the text (Ch. IX, paragraph 1). She can then be instructed to 'Read the passage carefully. Now analyse Hardy's use of background here keeping in mind the following considerations : (a) what Hardy describes, (b) the time of year depicted, (c) the character's state of mind and (d) the effect achieved.' Questions of this kind will test not only comprehension but also skill and ensure to some extent that the text and the study units will not be by-passed. These would hopefully forestall the possibility of the tendency to cram. The tendency to repeat questions must be avoided so that one may break out of the 'guess paper' and 'model answer' syndrome. (At IGNOU, examinations constitute 70 per cent of the overall assessment credits. 30 per cent are reserved for assignments).

ASSIGNMENTS

These may consist of short-answer, essay type multiple choice questions and so on. It is important to give detailed instructions to students about how to answer them. The student is expected to send the completed assignment to her counsellor who in turn must give a detailed commentary addressed to the student in a supportive spirit. This personal attention to each student assignment is designed to compensate for the lack of the teacher's physical presence. Submitting assignments regularly is a great motivating factor as it not only provides the feedback but also the human relationship. Here the counsellor's role is extremely important. A recept assessment by a counsellor on the Foundation Course in English made rather severe general criticism without referring to specific examples or suggesting constructive methods of improvement. Careless assessment can discourage the student past redemption. In order to safeguard against such cavalier assessment, the counsellor must be given detailed instructions on the mode of assessing with perhaps an assessed model assignment. Assessing literary essays is a highly subjective activity and different counsellors will adopt different criteria. This problem can be tackled to an extent by drawing the assessor's attention to the marks to be awarded for different aspects of the student's work. The allocation could be for (a) exposition (clarity and presentation);

(b) study of literature (understanding and relevance of material covered); (c) originality.[9] Effective assessment can arrest the drop-out rate, a spectre that continues to haunt all distance education institutions.

AUDIOS

Audio aids are fairly commonly available to both the formal and non-formal educational streams. But it is not enough to have access to educational technology. What is important is how meaningfully we can use it in the interests of persuasive communication. (The audio material prepared at IGNOU is available at the study centres. As all our students may not have access to this facility, the audio is not a complement to the print material but is complete in itself carrying useful material over and above that in the print). Audio is an excellent aid in literature teaching. The experience of a well-recited poem or a selected passage from a novel contributes to our overall appreciation of it. Let us consider the possibility of an audio programme for *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. A discussion of Hardy's use of imagery could feature readings of various passages from the text that would make the words come alive and evoke the images in the minds of the student. For instance, listening to the following passage can contribute more to the student's understanding than a long-drawn prosy explanation :

> Casterbridge was the complement of the rural life around . . . And in autumn airy spheres of thistledown floated into the same street, lodged upon the shop fronts, blew into drains, and innumerable tawny and yellow leaves skimmed along the pavement, and stole through people's doorways into their passages with a hesitating scratch on the floor, like the skirts of timid visitors. (Ch. IX).

This direct experience contributes to the student's appreciation of literature. The aim is to encourage the student to develop the taste for literature that will extend well beyond their reading of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*.

VIDEO

There is an old Chinese proverb that says 'I hear, and I forget;

I see and I remember . . . .' Video is an even more popular medium than audio as reports from our study centres indicate. Video is an effective medium of communication particularly suited to contemporary needs. According to Marshall McLuhan our students watch a lot of film and television and as a result they have a more pictorial thought process than earlier generations.[10] In using video we must also be alert to the conventions of decoding visuals. For example, without adequate commentary, it would be quite possible to mis-read the representation of landscape in a video on Hardy. On the other hand, if connections are made (a) between the real and the fictional world; (b) the effect of environment on character; (c) how background provides an objective correlative to the human drama and (d) how continuity and change impinge on human relationships, the student begins to understand the complex workings of the writer's imagination. Video can be used to depict the plot development visually by the dramatisation of key episodes. Or video could be an effective medium for placing the novel within its socio-historical and political context. It can also present a classroom situation which would encourage the student to identify with and share in the experience of other students like themselves. A discussion of the personal responses to the novel by prominent Hardy scholars could be especially interesting to students in remote areas.

FACE TO FACE

These are counselling sessions conducted by local teachers at the various study centres. The stress at IGNOU is on interactive communication and this implies that the student must participate at counselling sessions which should ideally be discussion sessions. The teacher is no longer a lecturer but merely an adviser trying to get the best participation possible from the students. But reports from counselling sessions in other subjects seem to suggest that most students do not read the material prior to counselling and expect summaries of it. This trend can undermine the very base of autonomous learning. It may be possible for faculty members from IGNOU to conduct counselling sessions wherever possible. Counsellors can further encourage students of literature to respond to texts in individual and original ways. For it is not enough to place literature within its historical and cultural context but also to

respond to it from the reader's specific position within a particular historical moment and a particular cultural context. Moreover, the face-to-face sessions must serve to synthesize the penagogic thrust of the multi-media mix, if the aims of distance education are to be realised so that education rather than mere information is retailed to our students.

For distance education to attain credibility as a viable educational alternative, we need to lay greater stress on :

(a) Teacher-training : initial orientation to all teachers in the methodology of distance teaching and in-service training from time to time;
(b) Pre-distribution testing of all materials : for level determination.
(c) learner-centricity : to be encouraged at all costs.
(d) using the multi-media package rather than just print : introduction of radio and television broadcasts would reach out to a larger number of students;
(e) encourage peer-group syndicates wherever possible : the discussion and sharing of common problems would result in more effective learning.

The efficacy of the distance teaching system will then have specific implications for realising the aims of teaching literature and making it a meaningful discipline within our educational context.

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11

Research on Completion and Disscountinuation in Distance Education

JOHN A. BAATH

1. What is meant by completion and discontinuation in this context ?

It is far from self-evident what is meant by discontinuation, or non-completion, or dropout, in distance education. At a distinct majority of the correspondence schools, students are being enrolled continuously, and they are often allowed to keep a very flexible time schedule. This makes it difficult to determine exactly when a slow student should be considered a dropout. In certain investigations, inactivity during three months has been used as a criterion of non-completion, in other cases, inactivity during six months (inactivity=no assignments sent in for correction and comments).

Even the term "completion" suffers from a slight ambiguity. At certain schools a student may be considered a completer although he has sent in only, say, 90 per cent of the assignments for correction and comments.

Moreover : Is the submission of assignments really an adequate criterion of course completion ? There might be students who study even a whole course and get out of it what they want to, without sending in one single solution. Data from the EHSC

*Paper to the EHSC autumn 1981 workshop 26—28 October in Madrid, Spain.

research project "Two-way communication in correspondence education" show that submission of assignments is not perfectly indicative of how far a student has reached in his studies (Baath, 1980, p. 87 f.). Some students did apparently not send in solutions in proportion to how much of the course material they had worked through. Still, the difference was by no means dramatic. It might therefore equally well be concluded that the submission of assignments was a fairly good criterion of the participants, study activity.

It should be added, however, that non-completion from the school's point of view is not necessarily identical with non-attainment of the student's own study goals. Completion is not " . . .directly indicative of the learner's achievement or, of the accomplishment of his goals" (Wedemeyer, 1971, vol. 4, p. 556; cf. Lightly, 1971, p. 21 and Delling, 1975). To some students, course completion is hardly an essential study goal. They want to get something specific from their course and are content when they have obtained that. A dropout who was a successful inventor was asked in an interview why he had not completed his course. His answer was :

> I am a busy man. I took this course to learn how to solve a certain problem in advanced physics. When I learned that, I stopped sending in lessons. (James & Wedemeyer, 1959, p. 93).

In the EHSC research project we also found that some non-completers thought that they had accomplished their study goal in spite of their discontinuation of the course (Baath, 1980, p. 89 f.). However, in proportion to the total number of dropouts, the "satisfied non-completers" were rather few.

2. How many students do complete their courses ?

Although there are some uncertainties connected with the notions of completion and discontinuation in the distance education context, it is fairly safe to say that the completion rate in this type of study in often fairly low (e.g., Noffsinger, 1926; Sommer, 1965; Donehower, 1968; Mackenzie et. al., 1968; Britain, 1970; Pfeiffer & Sabers, 1970: Rekkedal, 1972a, 1978; Bartels & Fritsch, 1976). When non-starters (i.e. students who have

registered for a course but who have not sent in one single assignment for correction and comments) are included among non-completers, dropout rates round 50 per cent are not unusual, The variation between schools and even between courses at the same school is, however, most considerable. As an extreme, from 0 to 100 per cent completers have been found in different courses of the same institution (Ward, 1954).

Non-startes are sometimes as frequent as—or even more frequent than—"real" dropouts. On the whole, most of the dropping out normally happens during the very first part of a correspondence course (James & Wedemeyer; 1959; Sheath, 1965; Sommer, 1965; Pfeiffer & Sabers, 1970; Rekkedal, 1972a, 1978).

The data from the EHSC research project are concordant with the general pattern. In one part of the project, 1750 registered students from six Swedish, Norwegian and English correspondence courses were studied. 535 completed their courses, which means just slightly more than 30 per cent. In one course we got only 8.4 per cent completers, wereas the percentage of completers in another course was as high as 65.7. Out of the 1,215 non-completers no less than 758 were non-starters. Thus, calculated on the total student body, more than 43 per cent did never send in one single assignment for correction and comments—i.e. were non-starters (Baath, 1980, p. 83, 92, and 112).

These figures are certainly not particularly encouraging. However, in order to make justice to distance education we must add that the completion rates in this study form do not differ very much from what is usual in other forms of non-compulsory, part-time adult study (cf., e.g., Verner & Davis, 1964; Borgstrom et. al, 1970; Nilsen, 1974; Borgstrom & Jonsson, 1976; Houtkoop, 1979).

3. Are there any student characteristics related to completion and discontinuation?

In a number of research studies, correlations have been found between demographical variables and completion. Sex is one example. When studying the same courses, women discontinue their studies to a smaller extent than men, according to reports by Donehower (1968), Reedy (1971), and Lockwood (1973). Age constitutes another example. Donehower (1968), Britain (1972), and Rekkedal (1972a) found that older students completed their courses to a higher degree than younger ones.

In addition, the reasons for taking the course have been shown to make a difference in certain studies (Donehower, 1968; Britain, 1972), as well as factors like "maturity" or being in an established family and work situation (Britain, 1972; Rekkedal, 1978). Previous (positive) experience of distance study is also most clearly correlated with course completion (Rekkedal, 1978; Wangdahl, 1979)

The finding that previous experience of distance study is indicative of course completion was strongly supported by data from the EHSC research project (Baath, 1980, p. 85).

4. Which causes of reasons for non-completion are given by the dropouts themselves ?

The causes of and reasons for non-completion given by the students are most often factors which are not directly related to the teaching provided : (1) lack of time, generally due to the student's gainful employment, (2) changed plans, (3) illhealth, family problems, etc. (Fairing & Hughes, 1950; Bradt, 1956; James & Wedemeyer, 1959; Sheath, 1965; Sloan, 1966; Rekkedal, 1972a, 1978; Houtkoop, 1979). Some respondents do state teaching-related factors as a major cause or reason, however, e.g., difficult and uninspiring course material (Kustermann, 1970), too long turn-round time of assignments and a harsh tutor (Harter, 1969), or difficulties in studying on one's own (Wangdahl, 1979).

The statements made by non-completing students taking part in the EHSC project are fairly typical (Baath, 1980, p. 88 f,; cf. Flinck, 1978, p. 58). Only a minority of those non-completers who answered the questions thought that they had any appreciable difficulties in starting their studies (24 per cent), that the possible dullness (24 per cent) or difficulty (29 per cent) of the course material had delayed their studies, or that troubles as to the assignments for submission had seriously interfered with their study rate (25 per cent). Instead, other work (75 per cent) and lack of time is general (65 per cent) were stated as the main causes of not making any progress in one's course.

However, in one of the courses (with an extremely low completion rate), 42 per cent stated that the course material had been difficult to understand. Moreover, 46 per cent asserted that the course material had seemed dull. In another course (also with a very low completion rate), 43 per cent stated that the course

material had been difficult to understand, whereas 45 per cent maintained that the assignments for submission had been difficult to understand.

5. Are there any course characteristics related to completion and discontinuation ?

Thus, lack of time, changed plans etc. are the causes of or reasons for discontinuation most often given by the dropouts themselves. It is of course difficult to know to what extent these causes/reasons are the basic ones. One would guess, however, that a teaching better adapted to the students in question could have made at least some of them rearrange their time schedules, change their priorities—and, consequently hold on to their initial plans. This is also indicated by the students who actually state teaching-related factors as a major cause of or reason of their dropping out.

In addition, there are other data clearly indicating correlations between course characteristics and course completion. For instance, short, vocationally oriented courses have comparatively good completion rates. This is especially the case when the course aims at a higher qualification within a vocational area where the students are already working (Allen, 1971; Smith, 1976; Houtkoop, 1979). As previously mentioned, one of the EHSC research project courses had a completion rate as high as nearly 66 per cent. This course (Psychology of Management) is comparatively short and is also clearly vocationally oriented, in contrast to the other five courses investigated in the same part of the project.

A number of researchs report favourable effects on students' study activities and course continuation of measures taken by the correspondence school, such as reminders, encouraging letters etc. (Pfeiffer, 1969; Britain, 1972; Rekkedal, 1972b). Rekkedal & Hallem (1975) report higher study activity as a result of inserting a short how to study course at the beginning of the studies.

The turn-round time of the assignments for submission has also been shown to constitute a factor of importance. In the distant study situation long turn-round time may have unfavourable effects at least on students' motivation :

> Nothing is more disheartening to the student than to put forth the effort necessary to prepare an assignment and then wait and wait and wait for its return. (Childs, 1963, p. 29).

This view on the importance of the turn-round time is empirically supported by Harter (1969). In his investigation the most frequent reason for dropping out, given by the students, was that they had to wait too long the return of their assignments.

In a well-controlled experiment with varied internal turn-round time (i.e., the time that elapses from the arrival of a student's solutions to the distant study institution until they are returned to the student), Rekkedal (1973) found a most distinct correlation between turn-round time and completion of the course. Quicker handling of the students' written assignments, giving a total turn-round time of one week or less, resulted in a higher completion rate.

In two studies it has been shown that students may tolerate a total turn-round time of about one week without negative effects, but not much more (Rekkedal, 1973, Baath & Mansson, 1977). However, this limit probably varies with different student groups, courses, and even countries (Baath, 1978). Anyhow, in correspondence education with computer-assisted two-way communication it is possible to confine the total turn-round time to about one week (Baath and Mansson, 1977, p. 28).

Within the framework of the EHSC research project, computer-assisted distance education—where all regular tutor corrections and comments to submitted assignments are programmed and printed out by a computer—resulted in a higher percentage of starters than traditional distance education. In one of the two courses in question, the computer-assisted version also showed a clearly greater proportion of completers than the traditional one (Baath, 1980, p. 125 f.).

In distance education with traditional postal two-way communication, the behaviour of the correspondence tutor may effect students' completion considerably. In particular, the tutor's ability to promote students' motivation seems to be of importance (Baath and Wangdahl, 1976). In one research study (see Kelly, 1963), a control group was given traditional correspondence tutoring, whereas the experimental group obtained a more "personalized" instruction by mail. This meant, among other things, more extensive and more individualized tutor comments. Considerable differences with regard to study perseverance were found, in favour of the experimental group. In another study,

Brady (1976) found a clear correlation between students' experienced "learning trauma" (tending to lead to dropout from the studies) and descriptions of unfavourable interactions with the tutor. He also found that tutors who regard and treat their students as individuals contribute to diminishing the risk that "learning traumas" will occur among the students.

Gibbs and Durbridge (1976) found some empirical evidence that tutor qualities like "warmth", enthusiasm and empathy can further the motivation of correspondence students. Stein (1960, p. 166) reports an interesting case. At his institution, the percentage of completers in a correspondence course was doubled after the institution had changed the tutor of the course " . . .from a cold, subject-oriented man, to someone equally competent in the content who also liked people".

6. What could we do in order to raise the completion figures ?

Malley et. al. (1976) have studied the dropout problem from an interesting theoretical point of view : Durkheim's theory of suicide, previously applied by Tinto (1975) to dropout in higher (face-to-face) education. Malley et. al. hypothesize that, as a rule, distant students are weakly integrated into the social system of the teaching institution. Their interactions with representatives of the school are often infrequent and not very intense, and they have normally no contacts at all with other students at the school. This tends to entail low involvement in the social system, which in turn is an indicator of potential dropout. Consequently, according to this model all participants in pure distance education are "would-be-suicides"—i.e. potential dropouts. Malley et. al. suggest that the way out of this situation may be found in supplementary face-to-face contacts with the distant tutor and/or with fellow students.

Is there any empirical evidence that supplementary face-to-face contacts can actually increase the proportion of completers in distance education ? Yes, there is. According to a considerable number of research studies, a greater study rate and a higher proportion of course completions are the most tangible effects of face-to-face contacts as a supplement do distance education (Montross, 1956; Lockwood, 1973; Bolte et. al., 1974; Muller, 1974: Ness, 1976; Smith, 1976).

However, pure distance education—in the form of correspon-

dence education—is a powerful form of instruction in itself, provided that its potential is fully utilized (which is most often not the case).

Generally speaking, distance educators should try to match students with courses in the best way possible. Most probably active counselling of prospective students could eliminate one prevalent cause of non-start and non-completion. It appears that far from all distant students have made it clear to themselves, in advance, at what level their course is, what it deals with, and what it demands of them. In the EHSC research project, enormous individual differences as concerns study time were found—in one course from 1 to 500 study hours. These extreme values indicate a need of better pre-enrolment counselling. Clearer description of courses, preferably supplemented by representative extracts, would probably be of good help. In addition, personal counselling—or computer-assisted counselling (Kuffner and Staller, 1978; Fritsch et. al. 1979)—before each definite choice of course would certainly also be highly desirable.

Moreover, we have seen (section 5) that shorter turn-round time of students' solutions, as well as reminders or encouraging letters and a brief how to study course can affect study perseverance in a favourable way.

Matching students with courses also means trying to design the course material in such a way that it fits the needs of the students, makes them feel the joy of studying and promotes their motivation to persevere. In the literature on distance education there are many suggestions how this goal could be achieved, e.g. in handbooks like Erdos (1967), Holmberg (1974), Sarramona (1975), Jenkins (1976), and Cunningham (1978). Holmberg's theory of "guided didactic conversation,' as an essential trait of distance education is certainly relevant in this context (Holmberg, 1978, p. 29-37; 1981, p. 30-33; Holmberg and Schumer, 1980).

Conscious efforts systematically to apply contemporary general teaching models to distance education (Baath, 1979) may also provide interesting results with regard to the design of the course material and could thus, potentially, promote the students' ability to complete their courses.

Most probably, the design of the distant two-way communication system and the behaviour of the distant tutor is of a very great importance. In section 5 we found empirical evidence that

this may, in many cases, be a crucial factor. There are strong indications that a tutor who really tries to help his students—and is not hindered to do so by the two-way communication system of the school—and who constantly treats his students in a friendly way as individual human beings, can affect the students study perseverance to a very substantial extent.

Since the most critical part of a distant study course is the very beginning of it (cf. section 2), it appears most desirable that, on a very early stage, the tutor contacts each of his new students, although the reason why he should do so may vary, to some extent, with the view of teaching that is adopted at the particular school. For instance (Baath, 1979: cf. Baath, 1980, p. 144 f.) it may be maintained that the tutor should get in touch—by mail or by telephone—with his newly enrolled students :

- to be able to individualize his tuition with regard to the students' previous "reinforcement patterns" (Skinner), or
- to facilitate the students' mathemagenic activities" (Rothkopf), or
- to be able to anchor the material of the first study units in the students' individual previous knowledge and "cognitive structure" (Ausubel), or
- to get an idea of the students' comprehension of the basic concepts and principles of the course (Bruner), or
- to establish a good personal relationship with the learner (Rogers).

This implies that, to some extent, the tutor gets to know his students. Therefore, the main purpose of the initial mail contacts (on the tutor's initiative) should be that the student and the distant tutor become acquainted with each other. By this, the tutor could get an idea of the new student's study experience, previous knowledge, interests, and principal motives for taking the course—information that should be useful, particularly, when it comes to giving the student adequate help at the beginning of the course.

If, in addition, the student gets to know his tutor at a very early stage—which implies that the tutor also introduces himself rather fully—this might further the student's integration into the social system of the school (cf. Malley et. al., 1976) and prevent discontinuation of the course.

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12

Why Students Drop out from Correspondence Courses

DR. INAYAT KHAN

INTRODUCTION

With the independence of India, the need to democratize higher education was strongly felt. Opportunities for higher education were limited both in scope and size. Expansion was hindered by lack of adequate financial resources and trained personnel. The ministry of Education became aware of the problem and started seriously considering the question of introducing non-formal education through correspondence. They were encouraged by the unparalleled success of correspondence courses in various other developed and developing countries.

So correspondence courses were started in this country towards the middle of 1962 as an experiment to (1) provide an efficient and less expensive method of educational instruction at the college level, (2) democratise higher education, (3) cater to the educational needs of geographically remote areas. The University of Delhi alone started to give B.A. course through correspondence as a pilot project and since then there has not been any looking back.

Correspondence courses have come to stay in this country and they have been recognized as a legitimate system for furthering the spread of educational prospects in the country both by Ministry of

*An ICDE Research Project presented to the XIII International Conference on Distance Education held in Melbourne, Australia, 13-20 August, 1985).

Education and the University Grants Commission, the educational planners of the country. At present no less than thirty universities are offering courses through correspondence, which prove the usefulness and viability of correspondence courses. The Education Commission of India. (1964) also long felt the need of correspondence courses and therefore suggested that "by 1986, at least a third of the total enrolment in higher education could with advantage be provided through correspondence . . ."

At the moment, there does not seem to be any clear consensus in the country about the things to come in teaching and development of correspondence courses. A good per centage of the students who enrol themselves to read through correspondence, drop out without completing their courses. This drop-out is a national wastage.

Purpose of the survey

In this survey, therefore, the present researcher investigated the various reasons for which the students of correspondence courses drop out without completing the course; suggested some steps to minimize this drop out. The project also took up various other related problems faced by the distant learners in the continuation of their learning at a distance effectively.

Hypotheses and assumptions

This project has taken up the following hypotheses and assumptions for considerations :

- The correspondence institutes in their success might have become complacent to ignore the UGC guidelines suggested from time to time.
- Correspondence courses have come to stay, but their growth by and large may have become unwieldy.
- Correspondence courses were started as a non-profit making concern of the highest educational body (e.g. the university), yet profit-earning and money-making may have made the institutes sluggish to the problems of the distant learners.
- The correspondence institutes by constantly dealing with unseen students may have forgotten that the distant learners are also living learners with some basic learning

aspirations.

- The reasons for which a student drops out might be financial, educational or personal.
- Proper evaluation of the system might not have been made by the educational planners of the country.
- Facilities available to regular students might have been absent in the correspondence system.
- The courses might be very heavy to part-time and own-time students.
- The tution fees charged by correspondence institutes might be too high.

Scope of the project

The project had taken up 1983 as the base year vis-a-vis the enrolment and drop-out figures of previous two years and accordingly a list of drop-outs was collected from the correspondence institutes of the country operating at the tertiary level related to those years.

Limitations encountered

The project was originally planned to include all drop-outs of the correspondence system of the country. But the time granted by the ICDE was too little (about ten months). Hence the study took the case of drop-outs at the first degree level only.

Moreover, during the period of research, the country faced two calamities, (1) assassination of her beloved Prime Minister and its aftermath, and (2) the unprecedented large number of deaths at Bhopal due to MIC gas leakage. Perhaps due to this reason and reluctance of some correspondence institutes to part with their data connected with this research, the present study could not take up all the institutes of the country. However, all the major institutes of the country have been covered in this study.

Rationale of the project

So far every little research has been done in the system of correspondence courses in this country. None of these studies has even dealt with the case of drop-outs, their reasons and remedies in any aspect. As stated earlier, this wastage of national resources can be checked, and better utilized by the outcome of this project. No assessment till now had been made to study the problems

faced by the distant learners in this country.

Significance of the Study

There was thus an imperative need for investigation of this type. In the present hour of experimentation, when correspondence courses are still in the formative stage, this survey throws enough light on the working of correspondence courses in this country.

ANALYSES OF THE RESPONSES RECEIVED FROM THE DROP-OUTS

About one fourth of the students enrolled in various correspondence institutes in this country do not complete their courses every year for various reasons. For instance in 1981, out of 21,605 students enrolled in eleven correspondence institutes, 6,465 (29.9 per cent) did not pursue their studies to complete their courses. Similarly in 1982, of the 16,275 enrolled students in these institutes, 3,463 (21.27 per cent) dropped out. In 1983, 18,280 students took admission, but 4,243 (23.21 per cent) failed to complete their work. A year-wise and institution-wise break-up of the enrolment and drop out figures is given below.

Who is a drop-out ?

There is obvious difficulty about the definition of the concept (drop-out). Inactivity or non-submission of assignments to the institute does not necessarily mean a drop-out. Though an active distant learner shows his motivation of learning and study activity by submitting as many assignments as he can, non-submission of assignments does not indicate directly the non-accomplishment of his goals. (Cf. Light 1971, p. 21 and Delling, 1975). Even some non-completers (their number is very few) thought that they had accomplished their study goal in spite of their discontinuation of the course (Baath 1980, p. 89). James and Wedemeyer (1959, p. 93). have reported of a case where a successful inventor-student did not complete his course because—

'I am a busyman (in the words of the student). I took this course to learn how to solve a certain problem in advanced physics. When I learned that, I stopped sending in lessons'.

The present survey has taken the following definition of a drop-out : a student who either voluntarily or otherwise ceases to

TABLE 1

Enrolment Figures Vis-a-Vis Dropout Figures for Three Years

Name of the institute	*Employment*			*Drop-out*		
	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*
1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*
1. Instt. of Corr. Courses University of Madras.	9,361 (100%)	6,235 (100%)	8,089 (100%)	3,660 (39.09)	1,451 (22.94)	1,788 (22.01)
2. Instt. of Corr. Courses Annamalai University	2,822 (100%)	2,967 (100%)	3,432 (100%)	833 (29.51)	886 (29.86)	1,509 (43.96)
3. Instt. of Corr. Courses Univ. of Kerala	601 (100%)	412 (100%)	435 (100%)	178 (29.61)	72 (17.47)	72 (16.55)
4. Instt. of Corr. Courses Patna University	156 (100%)	321 (100%)	341 (100%)	66 (42.3)	92 (28.66)	84 (24.63)
5. Instt. of Corr. Edn. Univ. of Jammu	169 (100%)	121 (100%)	91 (100%)	27 (15.97)	19 (15. 7)	18 (19.78)
6. Instt. of Corr. Edn. Univ. of Kashmir	233 (100%)	186 (100%)	189 (100%)	50 (21.45)	41 (22.04)	48 (25.39)
7. Instt. of Corr. Courses Madurai Kamraj Univ.	2,013 (100%)	1,300 (100%)	1,150 (100%)	713 (35.41)	150 (11.53)	— —
8. Dir. of Corr, Courses Punjabi Univ. Patiala	2,784 (100%)	1,366 (100%)	1,193 (100%)	461 (16.55)	278 (20.35)	190 (15.92)
9. Dir. of Corr. Courses Punjab University.	948 (100%)	1,114 (100%)	1,089 (100%)	38 (4.0)	36 (3.23)	47 (4.3)

(Contd.)

TABLE 1 (*Contd.*)

1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*
10. Dir. of Corr. Courses Utkal University	300 (100%)	220 (100%)	158 (100%)	95 (31.6)	42 (19.09)	48 (30.37)
11. Dir. of Corr. Courses Himachal Pradesh University	2,218 (100%)	1,943 (100%)	2,113 (100%)	344 (15.5)	396 (20.38)	439 (20.77)
Grand Total	21,605 (100.0)	16,275 (100.0)	18,280 (100.0)	6,465 (29.92)	3,463 (21.27)	4.243 (23.21)

Compiled from the information received from the institutes.

be on the rolls of the institute is a drop-out. He does not complete the course nor sits for the final examination for the degree or diploma of the university. A small note of explanation is required at this stage. Submission of assignments, though officially considered in this country as one of the requisites to complete a course through correspondence, is often not insisted upon. Students sometimes send the assignments at the fag end of the year (without hoping of getting them back duly tutor-marked from the institute) to escape the stipulation of the institute. The institute also does not object to such practices. For the institute, the most important factors of continuation of a student, are his instalments of fees. Generally a student pays his fees in two instalments (once at the time of admission and again in the middle of the session). If he fails to pay his second instalment of fees even after a few letters of reminder from the institute, his name is struck off the rolls. And he becomes a dropout.

Therefore, in the Indian context, dropouts can be divided into two types :

Type 1 dropped out because of compulsions such as family problems including ailment, unfavourable service conditions and high tution fees.

Type 2 dropped out because of voluntary reasons such as uninteresting lessons, less contact with the teacher, poor service by the institute, lack of regular college life and loneliness of the learner

So in the present survey, an effort was made to know why such a large number of students do not complete their studies. For this purpose, a 30-point questionnaire was sent by post to the drop-outs of the year 1983 belonging to eight institutes listed above. (1) First the students were asked the reasons for enrolling as a student of correspondence courses and then the reasons for dropping out in the middle of the courses were asked. The following were the important items asked in the above questionnaire :

- Reasons for enrolling in correspondence institutes.
- Reactions to the distance education system.
- Reasons for non-completion of the course.
- Suggestions for reducing the number of dropouts in the distance education system.

Important Characteristics of the Sample Dropouts

The subject questionnaire was sent to 5,516 students, who dropped out of the courses in the session 1983. Of these, 1639 or 29.7 per cent students completed and returned the questionnaires. Of the respondents, 1065 (64.97 per cent) were male students and 574 (35.03 per cent) were female students. All these students were living in various states of this country except two-one was from the Sultanate of Oman and the other was from UAE. (Both of them are Indians, but at present employed in the above countries). Seventy per cent of the respondents (1,149) were living in urban areas, whereas the rest were living in rural areas. 738 (or 45.02 per cent) of the respondents were married and 901 (or 54.96 per cent) students were unmarried. Of the sample respondents, 769 (or 46.91 per cent) students were employed and 870 (or 53.09 per cent) were unemployed. Majority of the respondents (896 or 54.7 per cent) was in the age group of 16-25 years.

Thus it appears that when studying the same courses, women students discontinue their studies to a lesser extent than men. This also tallies with the survey done by Donehower (1968), Reedy (1971), Lockwood (1973) and Baath (1981). Similarly older students do not favour the idea of dropping out at the middle of the session as is apparent from the fact that more than 54 per cent of the dropouts belong to the age group of 16-25 years.

An analysis of the responses shows that one important factor in causing drop out in this country, is the distance of the institute from the student's living place. For instance 41 per cent (or 671 dropouts) lived more than 201 kilometers away from the correspondence institute, whereas 16 per cent (or 262) of the dropouts lived in between 101-200 kilometers away from the institute. Thus the distance of the institute can be said to have influenced the drop-outs in this country.

Who do Students go in for Higher Education in this Country ?

Before asking them the reasons for their taking admission into a correspondence institute, and their dropping out in the middle of a session a question was asked to know as to why they went for higher education and the majority of the respondents opined that they decided to go in for higher education for improvement in their qualification. While promotional prospects featured for about

20 per cent (or 326) of the respondents, significantly about 5.33 per cent (or 87 students) said that they had nothing else to do ! When asked, 383 respondents pointed out that they had earlier read through correspondence and hence had a knowledge of the working of correspondence system. The following table sums up the findings on this account.

TABLE 2

Reasons for going in for Higher Education

Nature of response	*No. of respondents*
To improve my qualification	572 (or 34.89%)
For Promotional prospects in my job	326 (or 19.89%)
For the love of learning	245 (or 14.94%)
To increase my knowledge	409 (or 24.95%)
I have nothing else to do	87 (or 5.33%)

Why did they Choose Distance Education System ?

An interesting background was prepared with this question and the reasons were elaborated in the questionnaire (suggested by the researcher). Of the ten reasons, the respondents put forward only six reasons for their responses rejecting the others. The following table shows the answers :

TABLE 3

Reasons for Taking Admission into a Correspondence Course

Nature of responses	*No. of respondents*
I am employed. Hence I did not have adequate time to pursue full time education.	769 (or 46.91%)
I did not get admission in a regular college	593 (or 36.19%)
I lived in a remote area, where college education was not available.	117 (or 7.14%)
I am too old to go to a regular college now.	68 (or 4.14%)
One of my friends advised me to read here.	29 (or 1.77%)
Correspondence education is better than regular college education.	63 (or 3.85%)

So lack of regular college facilities and employment are the

main reasons that led students to take up correspondence system of education in this country. Geographically remote areas were also served well by correspondence courses. These reasons can be cited as plus points in favour of distance education in this country.

When asked to react to the correspondence system, significantly about 65 per cent of the respondents said that they "found the experience interesting", whereas the rest did not give any opinion. None of them, however, considered the correspondence course "dull".

Why did they Discontinue their Studies ?

The next important point in the survey instrument was regarding the reasons for not completing the course. Seventeen possible reasons were enumerated for the respondents to tick. However, the respondents rejected eight of the reasons given and added one more reason for their dropping out. Some respondents gave more than one reason. Table 4 below arranges the data :

TABLE 4
Reasons for not Completing the Course

Nature of responses	*No. of respondents*
My job/service conditions interfered with my studies	673 (or 41.06%)
I did not get enough time to complete the course.	348 (or 21.23%)
Family/personal ailment interfered with my studies.	75 (or 4.57%)
I lost interest in studying alone. I did not know it was so difficult to read through correspondence.	38 (or 2.31%)
I did not get adequate contact with and advice from my teachers.	149 (or 9.09%)
Lesson materials were not of much interest	77 (or 4.69%)
I got a seat in a regular college.	78 (or 4.75%)
I changed my future plans.	63 (or 3.84%)
My home assignments were not returned to me. Hence I lost interest.	175 (or 10.67%)
I did not know the dates of payment to the institute.	5 (or 0. 3%)

Thus we find majority of the drop outs were hindered by their job requirements and service conditions to pursue their courses of studies. Even eight of the distant learners; who are serving in the Indian Military Force, admitted that they had to abandon their studies because they were stuck up in OPERATION BLUESTAR. (2) Employed/married students often complained of lack of time to write up home assignments and their number is about twenty-two per cent. Lack of adequate contact and non-return of the home assignments to the students after evaluation are two other major factors causing drop outs. They account for 21 per cent of the dropouts. Change of future plans, ignorance of the dates of payment to the institute are some of the minor causes put forward by the respondents. Regarding the dates of payment, it was found out that only about 25 per cent of the respondents received letters of reminder from the institute intimating them of their overdue fees. The others did not receive any intimation from the institute in this regard. It is important here to note that several studies conducted in the past revealed that reminders and encouraging letters proved useful in reducing the drapouts from the correspondence study system. (Cf. Pfeiffer 1969, Britain 1972, Rekkedal 1972). So though a minor per centage of students ascribed this reason to their eventual non-completion, this factor is also equally important for the policy decision of the correspondence institutes.

Non-return of evaluated answers often prove frustrating to the waiting distant learners. They are disheartened by such long—often futile wait for assignments. So it is not surprising to find that about one fifth of the dropouts discontinued on this account only. Turn-round time of the assignments also come into the purview of this point. At this time, it is worthwhile to point out that much is desired from the services of Post and Telegraph Department of this country. Unusual delays in delivery of postal articles and often dumping of letters in gutters are not new. So the institutes often put the blame on the postal services for defaulting in non-return/late return of assignments.

Quality of lesson materials also accounted for about 5 per cent of the drop-outs. It is often true (as was revealed by this researcher in his Ph. D. dissertation) that lesson materials intended for undergraduate students often resembled high grade research papers. In them, the writers put in all their best efforts without caring for the level of attainment and the intended terminal

behaviour of the learners. Hence it is not surprising that such materials do not serve any purpose from the learner's point of view.

Another reason advocated by about ten per cent of the respondents is "lack of adequate contact with the teachers". Very often distance education system is an object of ridicule on this score. This is mainly due to some old-fashioned academicians, who believe that education can be imparted only through face-to-face teaching. They also demand the presence of a guru to disseminate knowledge. However, they tend to forget the legendary warrior Ekalavya, who mastered the intricacies of martial techniques of Guru Dronacharya from a distance. (3) influenced by such out-dated ideas, students lost the required motivation to learn and progress in their studies alone. Our institutes can also be made to blame in this regard. If student conselling are given to the students by our institutes, at least this number of dropouts can be prevented. At times, contact class centres, which could have alleviated their fears, were arranged at a longer distance from their places of living.

What can be done to Reduce the Dropouts ?

One question was asked to the respondents on this heading and almost all the respondents sent in some suggestions. A gist of these is listed below. Though wordings varied, majority of the drop-outs agreed on these points.

TABLE 5

Suggestions made by Students to Drop the Dropout Rate

- Fees and other charges should be reduced to at least make them par with the fees charged in regular colleges.
- Prompt replies be given by the institutes to the letters of the students.
- Lessons, which can be easily understood by the students, should be sent to the students according to a pre-arranged scheme.
- Lessons should be so written that the students do not feel that they are reading alone.
- Lessons should be so written that after completion of the course, they help in acquiring the desired terminal behaviour.

— Home assignments should be returned after a reasonable turn-round time.
— Contact classes be organized in quick intervals and more often.
— Student counselling service be provided for not only the existing courses but also for future career of the students.
— Library/book bank facilities should be given to students.
— Radio broadcasts be organized to supplement the printed lessons.
— "The number of lessons should not frighten us."

These suggestions have been taken into consideration, while listing out the recommendations in this report.

To know the reaction of the dropped out students regarding the effectiveness of correspondence system in this country, two questions were asked in the questionnaire : one, whether they would like to read through correspondence again if chances come, and two, whether they would recommend correspondence courses to their friends for pursuing own-time education. It is gratifying to note that 95 per cent of the respondents were certain that they would like to read through correspondence again and only 5 per cent had had enough. They wanted to bid good-bye to us. However, these five percentage of students agreed that they would recommend correspondence courses to their friends. In other words, all of the respondents agreed on this point. So the effectiveness of distance education in furthering the cause of higher education can be said to be real phenomenal in this country.

Thus the analyses of the responses received from the drop outs covering eight correspondence institutes of this country reveal that much more is needed to be done by the educational planners for distance education in this country.

In the next chapter, the summary of the present survey and a few suggestions are given.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS

This survey was designed to investigate into the various reasons that lead students to drop out of their courses in the middle of the session and to suggest remedies. The summary of the present survey is given below.

After the analysis of the responses of the sample respondents, the reasons for dropping out can be divided into two. It was noted that most of the drop outs discontinued their studies due to lack of time. Of course, all those who complained on this score, were employed. Yet it is hightime that the correspondence courses should keep them in mind while fixing the courses, curricula and home assignment requirements. This can be achieved only if correspondence courses were made autonomous, free from the shackles of the conventional university regulations. At present, correspondence courses in this country are catering to those courses, which are meant and prepared for face-to-face teaching situations. In a bid to gain equivalence in their degrees and certificates, the correspondence institutes teach the same books, syllabi and curricula as are prescribed for regular college students.

The next point of complaint relates to high fees being charged by correspondence institutes. It is true that correspondence institutes are charging higher fees because they are expected to become self-sufficient in their income. The government and the UGC do not favour the idea of meeting the expenses of the institutes after an initial period of 5 years. However, ironically for this reason, some universities have milch cows in their correspondence institutes to meet their deficit budgets. It will not be out of place to mention here that in the Open University, London, the government is giving grants to the tune of 85 per cent of the total budget of that university. Therefore, the fees charged by our correspondence institutes should be at par with those of the regular colleges. This can take distance education to poorer section of the society who are also equally anxious to get higher education.

The services offered by our correspondence institutes are far from satisfactory. Distance learners often complained of negligence and silence on the part of the institutes.

Lessons constitute the backbone of correspondence teaching in this country. Yet the lessons are not prepared with imagination and naturally the students grumble about them. The quality of lessons, the quantum or reading and assignments to be done are all inter-linked and hence there should be a well-planned syllabi for the distant learners. Efforts should be made to prepare lessons with care and sincerity. For this purpose, a batch of well-trained and dedicated lesson writes are required.

Personal contact classes are equivalent of summer schools,

turtorials and counselling sessions of foreign correspondence courses. These classes give the distant learners chance to meet their teachers in person and clarify their doubts. So contact classes should be so arranged that the largest number of students get advantage. Yet it is regrettable that students complain regarding the utility of such classes.

Response sheet assignments provide two-way communication between the tutor and the taught in the correspondence system. Students very often complained of lack of sincerity in the evaluation of these assignments. Home assignments should be examined sincerely and sent back to a student within 10 days with constructive remarks about his performance. The more a student waits for it, the more disgusted he becomes with distance teaching techniques.

Hence, the following recommendations are made to reduce drop outs from the distance education system in India. Though we cannot do much regarding dropouts for personal reasons, we can definitely do a lot to the other category of non-completers.

- A central university affiliating all the present correspondence institutes should be established in the pattern of the Open University, London. This can give a lot of autonomy to the working of correspondence courses in this country.
- Lesson writing, engagement of contact classes and evaluation of home assignments should be done sincerely by a group of efficient and well-trained full-time teachers of the institutes.
- Lessons should be made more challenging to the students by using new techniques like programmed learning method, grading of lessons, use of self-check exercises etc. These lessons should take the entrance behaviour and the terminal behaviour of the learners into account.
- Fees structure should be rationalized.
- All correspondence institutes should have full-time teachers.
- More time may be granted to students, who desire to do so, to complete a particular course.
- A particular official/teacher may be entrusted with the task of replying to students querries/problems.

References

1. Three correspondence institutes did not send the mailing addressess of their drop-outs to this researcher as it was against the rules of their universities.
2. Military operation against the Sikh Terrorists in punjab conducted in June '84.
3. Cf. *Mahabharata* by Swami Chidbhavananda (1976) Tapovan series, pp. 32-33.

PART FIVE

FACULTY IMPROVEMENT IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

S.C.E.R.T. West Bengal
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13

The Need for Faculty Improvement

DR. MANJIT SINGH*

The success of a system of education depends chiefly on the teaching faculty. The educational policy-makers and administrators all over the world are aware of the fact that in order to deliver the goods, the teacher must continue his own education and keep himself up-to-date in his knowledge of the subject. Various faculty improvement schemes are, therefore, devised and made available to the teachers by the administration or the institution which they serve. In a paper delivered at the Eleventh World Conference of the International Council for Correspondence Education, William A. Fowler has forcefully expressed the need for faculty improvement by saying that "for an educational institution to discourage or prevent employees from continuing their education is hypocrisy of the first order". "The administration," he says, "has the fundamental responsibility to foster a positive environment for the continuing professional education of its staff."

My aim in this brief paper is to point out that while certain faculty improvement schemes are available in our country to the teachers in general, no attempt has been made to study the situation in which the teachers of correspondence courses are placed and, as a result, there are no schemes designed specifically

*This paper was presented to the National Seminar on Correspondence Education held in Chandigarh in August, 1979.

for faculty improvement in the field of correspondence education. There is no denying the fact that the job of the correspondence teacher calls for specialized training in planning, designing, writing and editing lessons, preparing supplementary reading material, revision exercises and model answers, teaching in concentrated doses at the personal contact programmes, planning radio talks, evaluating students' response sheets and a number of other activities such as answering students' letters, keeping a track of the students' progress, maintaining proper liaison with the staff responsible for the printing and despatch of teaching materials, etc. etc. Most of the teachers working in correspondence courses institutions are doing their job without any formal training in the principles and methodology of teaching correspondence education. As W.J.A. Harris points out in his monograph *The Distance Tutor* (1975) "there are few general training facilities available for new correspondence tutors either in this country (i.e. Britain) or in most other countries. It is, in fact, difficult to see who would, under the existing conditions, arrange such formal training unless correspondence study were to be a part of the general public education provision." The situation is no better in India although here the correspondence study *is* a part of the public education system. Even in the United State, as Fowler says, "aside from a few articles which have described the lack of a formal programme in the methods of correspondence education, little has been written . . . to document the necessity for such programmes. This is readily explained by the fact that since correspondence study it self has been largely ignored by the traditional academic community little is available to give credence to the need for a course on its educational methodology.

In the absence of any formal programme of training, the teachers of correspondence courses are training themselves while doing their job. They learn from each other, from their senior colleagues and, of course, from experience, what seems to work in the given situation. The results of this kind of on-the-job training are necessarily varied, and in some cases, the teachers adopt a rather casual attitude towards their job responsibilities. Several institutions, especially in advanced countries, have developed their own instructional manuals for course writers, instructors and administrative personnel. But even these manuals are not always taken seriously because they lack the feedback and

evaluation mechanism which is so necessary to keep them up-to-date. In India most of the correspondence courses institutions prepare general instructions for the lesson writers, the/editors and the evaluators of response sheets. But these instructions, prepared generally by senior correspondence teachers, are also based on their own experience and institution and are not backed by any systematic methodology or proper feedback from the students.

Thus the need for faculty improvement in the field of correspondence education has two aspects : firstly the teacher must continue his education in his own subject and keep himself informed of the latest developments in his discipline; and secondly, he must undergo some kind of training in the methodology of teaching by correspondence. It is the second aspect that needs to be emphasized here as it has been largely ignored so far. In this regard, I would like to make a few suggestions which may be considered by the correspondence educators and administrators assembled here so that some positive steps could be taken to improve the situation.

First of all, let me emphasize once again the urgent need for research in various aspects of correspondence education. At the Second National Seminar on Correspondence Education held at Patiala in 1976. I had submitted that such research could be organised at two levels—at the level of a central organisation and at the level of the institute offering correspondence courses. I had also identified some areas for research and suggested that besides the establishment of a National Institute for Correspondence Education, it was necessary that each institution should set up its own research and evaluation unit, chiefly to evaluate and improve its own teaching materials and procedures. However, nothing much has been achieved in this direction at either of the two levels. One or two institutions have no doubt, employed a statistician, and may be an assistant to help him, but no institution has established a full-fledged research unit so far, and no significant rasearch has been reported from any institution apart from some work done by a few individual teachers. Regarding the individual teacher, I must point out that he does not have sufficient motivation or incentive to engage himself in any major research on correspondence education. He would rather like to do research work in his own subject because it enhances his opportunities for promotion not only in the correspondence courses institute but

also in the regular teaching department. It is, therefore, necessary to think of some incentives that may urge the individual teacher to take up research in correspondence education. In this connection, it is also necessary to create a Faculty of Correspondence Education at the universities offering correspondence courses, in the way as we have Faculties of Languages, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences and other disciplines, so that the teachers could register themselves with this Faculty for research leading to M. Phil. and Ph.D in correspondence education.

In order to provide necessary training to the members of the faculty in the methodology of correspondence education, I would also suggest a Faculty Exchange Programme under which teachers of one institute could be sent to another institute for a period of three to six months to acquaint themselves with and participate in the methods and procedures evolved by different institutes for different aspects of teaching by correspondence. Necessary fellowships for this programme could be instituted by the University Grants Commission which could also send a couple of teachers every year to a distinguished correspondence courses institute abroad, such as the Open University in U.K. At the end of such visits under the Faculty Exchange Programme, whether within India or abroad, the visiting teacher should be asked to submit a written report giving his comments and observations on the functioning of the institute he has visited. These visits will bring us closer to our sister institutions and will also give us opportunities to explore possibilities of collaboration in certain areas where an inter-institutional approach may be more helpful to the cause of correspondence education than the present approach of working in isolation. Moreover; the experience and expertise gained by the visiting teachers will certainly increase their own competence as correspondence educators.

Another mode of faculty improvement would be the organisation of refresher courses and summer institutes for the teachers of correspondence courses. Such refresher courses should concentrate not only on the principles and methodology of correspondence education in general but should also deal with the problems of teaching specific subjects by correspondence. This second abjective i.e. the teaching of specific subjects by correspondence, has received very little attention so far from the scholars and researchers in the field. (I wrote a monograph on *Teaching*

English by Correspondence which was published by Punjabi University, Patiala in 1977 and my friend Mr. S.P. Anand of Punjab University, Chandigarh has also prepared a similar monograph which will be published shortly). I suggest that a number of 10-day workshops should be organised at different institutes where model lessons and Radio-Talks in various subjects should be actually produced after due discussion and then published and circulated to all the institutes. The little work that has already been done in this direction has neither been properly edited and published, not has it reached all the subject teachers in the field.

One of the problems in organising Summer Institutes or refresher courses is that a number of the teachers who come to attend them do not have the theoretical background or practical experience of some of the aspects of correspondence education which may be discussed there. This problem has been felt in other disciplines also. It has been suggested at the UGC level that teachers registered for summer institutes should be given a refresher course by correspondence before they come to attend the summer institutes. This will certainly make the summer institutes more effective and meaningful. For the teachers working in correspondence courses institutions, a correspondence course in the principles and methodology of correspondence education can go a long way in fulfilling the need for faculty improvement. The leaders in the field of distance education have been thinking, during the past few years, of developing a comprehensive correspondence course for correspondence teachers. But so far, no university or institution has established a systematic course of this type. Suggestions have come from various quarters : for example, in a paper presented at the 14th Workshop of the European Home Study Council (Leiden, Netherlands, 11-13 May, 1976), H. Schwalbe has proposed an outline of the contents of a basic course for distance educators. The outline includes; definition and description of the subject significant differences between oral and distance education, assumptions for course planning, course design, planning and evaluation process, course production, attendance and service to students, motivation of students, course distribution, the organisation of distance education institutes, selection and training of distance education staff and the presentation of distance education courses. "Experienced distance educators" says Schwalbe, "would not have too much trouble in developing such a

course". In William Fowler's paper also which I have already referred to, there is a description of a course to be developed by the National Home Study Council of the USA. "Topics to be covered in the course", he says "would include all areas of correspondence instructional methodology. More importantly, however, the course would cover home study educational and research areas that are usually not included in traditional 'methods' courses at colleges of education and would emphasize successful and proved methods of correspondence instruction". Without giving you the details of the NHSC course, I would like to draw your attention to a course being developed in India which is much more relevant to our own needs. This course, called 'An Introduction to the Writing of Correspondence Course Materials', has been developed in an experimental edition by the Centre for Educational Technology of the NCERT, New Delhi. The course has two parts—"the correspondence package of six study units and the Contact Programme to be given at a central place for about ten days. "Unit I outlines some of the main features of correspondence education in India and summarizes the main points a correspondence lesson writer needs to remember in preparing his teaching materials. Unit II covers the setting of objectives and course planning. The third Unit provides guidelines in writing self-instructional materials and the fourth examines the use of graphics and audio-visual material in correspondence education. Unit V deals with student and course evaluation. The final unit reviews the earlier material and discusses organisational considerations in planning correspondence-cum-contact courses."

The six Units of the course are brief and to the point and make very valuable and practical suggestions on writing correspondence course materials. Although there are one or two points on which I am not in total agreement with the suggestions made in this course, and other teachers in the field may also find some points of disagreement, these things can be discussed at the Contact Programme which follows the correspondence course. On the whole the efforts made by the CET is highly commendable and the sooner their course is put into service, the better it will be for the teachers of correspondence courses who will undoubtedly learn a great deal from this course.

In the end I would like to reiterate that the need for faculty

improvement in the field of correspondence education is strong and genuine and calls for sincere efforts on the part of all concerned—the Government, the U.G.C., the universities, the Correspondence Institutes and the teachers themselves.

14

Why Should We Train Our Teachers in the System of Distance Education

DR. INAYAT KHAN*

Distance education has been accepted as a legitimate system all over the world to further educational horizons of a country. It has assumed greater importance in the Indian context due to our need to democratize education at a lesser capital cost. The success of this system of education in India can be judged from the fact that at present no fewer than thirty-five Indian universities/Boards are offering courses through distance teaching. Two Open universities have already been established in the country. The number of students enrolled in various correspondence institutes has increased manyfold. For instance, in 1973-74, the total enrolment in Indian institutes of distance teaching was 48,392, whereas this number rose to 1,59,712 in the year 1982-83.[1] Thus within a span of adecade, the enrolment has increased more than 300 per cent. Yet this figure is far below the expected rate of 1/3rd of the total enrolment in 1986 for higher education, as envisaged by the Education Commission of India (1964-66).[2]

We need not attribute this success of distance education in India to the quality of our correspondence courses. The success has come mainly because of the increase in demand for higher

*This paper was presented to the Seminar on Communication Technology in Distance Education held in Dec., Chandigarh in Nov. 1986.

education and shortage of regular college in this country. A qualitatively successful distance education system requires a carefully planned interaction of teaching and learning between the teachers and the distant learners. Erdos (1967)[3] puts the onus of imparting knowledge and skills to the distant learners on the teachers working in the institutes of distance education. These instructions may not be oral, but they have the advantage of being studied in a place and at a time suitable to the student. The role of a teacher in this system has been emphasized for an effective two-way communication between the teacher and the taught.

Teaching through correspondence is quite different from preparing a lecture for face-to-face teaching. In regular classroom teaching, student motivation, classroom activities, feedback, proximity of the teacher and the learner create an ideal situation for learning. These essential factors of teaching and learning are simulated here in the form of lessons, contact programmes and response sheet assignments. In regular face-to-face teaching situations, the role of the teacher remains simply that of a facilitator of the student's comprehension of the subject through appropriate teaching methodology. The inherent technology adopted by some competent authors in their textbooks also helps the teachers in the classrooms to conduct and regulate the classroom teaching. However, in the distance teaching system, the situation is completely reverse. The students are a heterogenous group of students with irregular habits in studies and often some of their entrance qualifications less than the others. The following comparison made by Tiwari (1979)[4] amply illustrates the point.

Classroom situation	*Correspondence situation*
1. Audience	1. Clientale
a. Captive	a. Non-captive
b. Homogenous	b. Heterogenous
c. Full-timer, regular	c. Part-timer, irregular pace in studies.
d. Entry behaviour more or less uniform	d. Entry behaviour differs widely
e. Teaching by verbal aids and gestures.	e. Distant teaching; Almost no personal contact.
2. Teachers	2. Teachers
a. Master of situation	a. Dependent on various

Classroom situation	*Correspondence situation*
	media to reach his students.
b. May be shy of communicating in writing.	b. Flair of writing essential.
c. Teaching situation same through which he had himself acquired learning.	c. Teaching situation quite new and innovative.
3. Emphasis on teaching	3. Emphasis on self-learning.

Hence distance education is definitely a highly specialized branch of education requiring utmost care and intuition on the part of the teachers. Yet lamentably, in this country, some institutes of correspondence courses do away with the services of teachers. Teachers are considered unnecessary burdens on the budget of these institutes supposedly milch-cows of these universities. To quote an authority on this issue, Prof. Ruddar Dutt[5] found that only eleven teachers managed the institute catering to forty thousand distant learners in Madras University.

The present paper, which is based on a survey[6] conducted by this writer envisages to emphasize the correspondence teachers are not expendable items of budget; on the contrary they should be properly trained to meet the challenges of distance education. Preparation of reading material, taking personal contact classes and valuation of response sheet assignments are certainly not ordinary academic chores, which can be performed satisfactorily by one and all.

Let us examine, the various tools of teaching used by Indian correspondence institutes. As we are well aware, in Indian institutes, we depend mainly on (1) Lesson materials (2) Response sheet assignments (3) Personal contact Programmes to teach at a distance. These are dealt with one by one below :—

(A) Lesson Materials

All of us are sending a set of lessons (either printed or cyclostyled) to our students. These lessons are mostly written by full-time teachers of the institutes (where they are available) or by outside teachers. The basic guidelines that we follow to prepare these lessons are as follows. All institutes more or less follow the same guidelines.

— the lesson must be written to suit the needs of the distant and lone learner. As he may not have an immediate access to a library, the lesson should be self-sufficient.
— The style of the lesson should be conversational, simple and lucid. The lesson must be comprehensive to prevent the students to seek the help of cheap guide-books.
— The lesson must arouse curiosity and motivate the learners. Insertion of self-check exercises in the lesson can make it a student-active-learning material.

These guidelines do not emphasize the following equally important aspects of a good lesson, considered to be very important by Gagne (1970, p. 304)[7] and Strevens (1977, p. 14)[8]

— A lesson must link up with the previous knowledge of the learner.
— A lesson should be explicit in its objective.
— It must facilitate retention of new learning. This would encourage a student and make him feel his progress.
— It must be realistic, i.e., capable of being used both by the learner and the teacher for the purpose of learning/teaching.

This writer collected about 45 lessons in the subject of English meant for undergraduate distant learners from various correspondence institutes of the country and analysed them. He also collected responses from 43 teachers of English working in nine Indian correspondence institutes regarding the ideal format and the efficacy of lessons used for teaching at a distance. In various aspects of English teaching like prose, poetry, drama, grammer, composition, comprehension short story, they criticized the lessons being set to our students. When the reaction of a sample group of 100 students was recorded, many of them considered some lessons inadequate for the following reasons. (These reasons have been graded according to the importance given by the respondents.)[9]

1. The lessons do not give detailed understanding of the text.
2. They are written in a difficult language.

3. The lessons do not interest and excite me.
4. There is no teaching of grammer in these lessons.
5. I do not even form a general impression of the text from the lessons.
6. The lessons are not helpful from the examination point of view.
7. The lessons are not written in a conversational style.

(B) Response Sheet Assignments

Response sheet assignments from an integral part of our lessons. Most of our lessons at the end give assignments for the students, who are required to send their assignments to the institutes for correction. Some institutes in the country stipulate that a percentage of assignments must be returned by a student to make him eligible for sitting in the university examination. The UGC guidelines[10] also stipulate that :

> "The purpose of getting the response sheets should be to ensure that—
> (a) the student has understood and absorbed the course units sent to him.
> (b) he knows how to organize the material involved.
> (c) he gets a prompt evaluatory feedback which enables him to improve continuously through the comments/ suggestions for revision etc. that he received.
> (d) that he studies continuously throughout the year."

Various authorities on distance education also emphasize on response sheet assignments for an effective two-way communication between the distant learner and the teacher (Lembecke 1966[11]; Erdos 1967[12]; Burner 1971[13]; Taylor 1955[14]: Shafer 1969[15]). In the distance education system, where the teacher and the taught do not meet face to face, assignments provide them opportunities to communicate. A very warm, intimate and instructive relationship can be achieved through assignments between the two. Sometimes it is claimed that for this reason, correspondence courses offer better teacher-taught relation than available in face-to-face teaching (because of overcrowded classes where the students become a faceless mob to a teacher).

The reaction of the teachers and students in this country to

the response sheet assignments is equally suggestive. The major grouse of the students is that they do not get back their assignments after correction. Many of course admit that if there is no compulsion, they do not send assignments to the institute. The teachers feel that the response sheet questions are not prepared to really test the students. This writer collected some valued response sheet assignments from students and found to his dismay that the valuation of these assignments was done in a lackadaisical manner. Some of the answers were not valued at all. There was no comment. Just a few ticks and crosses and then the marks were awarded.

This speaks volumes of our present state of affairs in regard to response sheet assignments, which are considered to be one of the main tools of teaching through correspondence.

(C) Personal Contact Classes (PCP)

It is a common knowledge that PCP has been the only forum through which a distant learner meets his teacher in person. The teachers, students all like this programme and sometimes eagerly wait for them. The UGC guidelines also are very clear about the programme and its utility. The Directors/teachers/students all feel[16] that PCPs are very useful in an otherwise dreary routine of teaching/learning at a distance. But again we face many problems like less frequent, and short duration of these classes and the attitude of the teacher versus the interest of the students attending such classes. Sometimes, as the teachers taking classes were not the teachers of the institutes/writers of lessons, they did not do justice to the short classes. The number of such classes is limited and hence face-to-face teaching (as in regular colleges) cannot be carried out in detail. A trained/experienced teacher alone can use this occasion to the utmost benefit of the learners.

Thus in all three aspects of distance teaching viz,, preparation of lessons and response sheet assignments, student guidance through assignments and in the engagement of personal contact classes, many tricky points are often neglected by us. Teachers can work better if they are trained to meet the challenges in all these aspects of distance teaching.

We are boasting of our success in distance education by quoting the number of enrolments in our institutes, but few of us realize that due to lack of quality and proper service to students,

many of them drop out without completing the courses. For instance in 1981, 29.92 per cent of the enrolled students dropped out of eleven major correspondence institutes of the country. In 1982 the dropout per cent was 21.27, while in 1983, it was 23.21 per cent.[17] So it is hightime that we should make an introspection of our system and try to reduce the dropouts from our institutes. From a survey (1958)[18], the present writer found that students mainly drop-out for the following reasons :
(listed according to importance)

1. Ignorance in the system of correspondence courses
2. Loneliness in study
3. Change in future plan
4. Family/personal ailment
5. Uninteresting lesson material
6. Admission was sought and got in a regular college
7. Lack of adequate contact of and advice from the teachers
8. Non-return of home assignments
9. Lack of time
10. Job interference.

When we closely analyse the reasons given above, we find almost half of them can be by passed if the teachers are trained and properly motivated. In other words, the educational planners of the country should improve the teachers in order to improve the distance education in this country.

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